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**OUR VILLAGE:**  
**SKETCHES**  
**OF**  
**RURAL CHARACTER AND SCENERY.**

**BY**  
**MARY RUSSELL MITFORD,**

**AUTHOR OF JULIAN, A TRAGEDY.**

**VOLUME II.**

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## P R E F A C E.

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**THE** indulgent reception given to her little book of **Our Village** has encouraged the Author to extend her work by putting forth a second volume on a similar plan; consisting like the first of slight and simple delineations of country manners, blended with a few sketches drawn from a somewhat higher rank of society.

It is right also to say that of this, as of the former series, a part has already appeared in some of the most respectable periodical publications of the day.



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## A WALK THROUGH THE VILLAGE.

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WHEN I had the honour about two years ago of presenting our little Village to that multiform and most courteous personage the Public, I hinted I think that it had a trick of standing still, of remaining stationary, unchanged and unimproved in this most changeable and improving world. This habit, whether good or evil, it has retained so pertinaciously, that except that it is two years older, I cannot point out a single alteration which has occurred in our street. I was on the point of paying the inhabitants the same equivocal compliment—and really I almost may—for, setting aside the inevitable growth of the younger members of our community, and a few more gray hairs and wrinkles amongst the elder, I see little change. We are the same people, the same generation, neither richer, nor wiser, nor better, nor worse. Some, to be sure, have migrated ; and one or two have died ; and some——But we had better step out into the village and look about us.

It is a pleasant lively scene this May morning, with

the sun shining so gayly on the irregular rustic dwellings, intermixed with their pretty gardens ; a cart and a waggon watering (it would be more correct, perhaps, to say *beering*) at the Rose ; Dame Wheeler, with her basket and her brown loaf, just coming from the bake-house ; the nymph of the shoe-shop feeding a large family of goslings at the open door—they are very late this year, those noisy little geese ; two or three women in high gossip dawdling up the street ; Charles North the gardener, with his blue apron and a ladder on his shoulder walking rapidly by ; a cow and a donkey browsing the grass by the way-side ; my white greyhound, May-flower, sitting majestically in front of her own stable ; and ducks, chickens, pigs, and children, scattered over all.

A pretty scene !—rather more lopping of trees, indeed, and clipping of hedges, along the high road, than one quite admires ; but then that identical turnpike-road, my ancient despair, is now so perfect and so beautiful a specimen of Macadamization, that one even learns to like tree-logging and hedge-clipping for the sake of such smooth ways. It is simply the best road in England, so says our surveyor, and so say I. The three miles between us and B—— are like a bowling-green. By the way I ought perhaps to mention, as something like change in our outward position, that this little hamlet of ours is much nearer to that illustrious and worshipful



town than it used to be. Not that our quiet street hath been guilty of the unbecoming friskiness of skipping from place to place, but that our ancient neighbour, whose suburbs are sprouting forth in all directions, hath made a particularly strong shoot towards us, and threatens some day or other to pay us a visit bodily. The good town has already pushed the turnpike-gate half a mile nearer to us, and is in a fair way to overleap that boundary and build on, till the buildings join ours, as London has done by Hampstead or Kensington. What a strange figure our rude and rustical habitations would cut ranged by the side of some staring red row of newly-erected houses, each as like the other as two drops of water, with courts before and behind, a row of poplars opposite, and a fine new name. How different we should look in our countless variety of nooks and angles, our gardens, and arbours, and lime-trees, and pond ! But this union of town and country will hardly happen in my time, let B—— enlarge as it may. We shall certainly lend no assistance, for our boundaries still continue exactly the same.

The first cottage—Ah ! here is the post-cart coming up the road at its most respectable rumble, that cart, or rather caravan, which so much resembles a house upon wheels, or a show of the smaller kind at a country fair. It is now crammed full of passengers, the driver just protruding his head and hands out of the vehicle,

and the sharp clever boy, who in the occasional absence of his father officiates as deputy, perched like a monkey on the roof. "Any letters to day?" And that question, always so interesting, being unsatisfactorily answered, I am at leisure to return to our survey. The first cottage is that erst inhabited by Mr. and Mrs. H. the retired publican and his good wife. They are gone; I always thought we were too quiet for them; and his eyes being quite recovered, he felt the weariness of idleness more than ever. So they returned to W., where he has taken a comfortable lodging next door to their old and well-frequented Inn, the Pie and Parrot, where he has the pleasure every evening of reading the newspaper, and abusing the ministers amongst his old customers, himself a customer; as well as of lending his willing aid in waiting and entertaining on fair-days and market-days, at pink-feasts and melon-feasts, to the great solace of mine host, and the no small perplexity of the guests, who, puzzled between the old landlord and the new, hardly know to whom to pay their reckoning, or which to call to account for a bad tap;—a mistake, which our sometime neighbour, happier than he has been since he left the *Bar*, particularly enjoys. His successor here is an industrious person, by calling a seedsman, as may be collected by the heaps of pea and bean seed, clover and vetches piled tier above tier against the window.

The little white cottage down the lane which stands so prettily, backed by a tall elm wood, has also lost its fair inmate, Sally Wheeler ; who finding that Joel continued constant to our pretty Harriet, and was quite out of hope, was suddenly forsaken by the fit of dutifulness which brought her to keep her deaf grandmother company, and returned to service. Dame Wheeler has however a companion, in a widow of her own standing, appointed by the parish to live with and take care of her. A nice tidy old woman is dame Shearman ;—pity that she looks so frumpish !—her face seems fixed in one perpetual scold. It was not so when she lived with her sister on the Lea, then she was a light-hearted merry chatterer, whose tongue ran all day long—and that's the reason of her cross look now ! Mrs. Wheeler is as deaf as a post, and poor Mrs. Shearman is pining of a suppression of speech. Fancy what it is for a woman, especially a talking woman, to live without a listener ! forced either to hold her peace, or when that becomes impossible, to talk to one to whose sense words are as air ! La Trappe is nothing to this tantalization ;—besides the Trappists were men. No wonder that poor Dame Shearman looks cross.

The Blacksmith's !—no change in that quarter ; except a most astonishing growth amongst the children. George looks quite a man, and Betsy, who was just like a blue-eyed doll, with her flaxen curls and her apple-

blossom complexion, the prettiest fairy that ever was seen, now walks up to school every morning with her work-bag and her spelling-book, and is really a great girl. They are a fine family from the eldest to the youngest.

The Shoemaker's!—not much to talk of there; no funeral!—and (which disappoints my prediction) no wedding! My pretty neighbour has not yet made her choice. She does wisely to look about her. A belle and an heiress—I dare say she'll have a hundred pounds to her portion—and still in her teens, has some right to be nice. Besides, what would all the mamas, whose babies she nurses, and all the children whom she spoils, do without her? No sparing the Shoemaker's fair daughter! She must not marry yet these half dozen years!

The shop!—all prosperous, tranquil, and thriving; another little one coming; an idle apprentice run away,—more of him anon;—and a civil journeyman hired in his room. An excellent exchange! Jesse is a very agreeable person. He is the politician of the village since we have lost Mr. H., and as he goes every day into B—— in his paper cap to carry our country bread, he is sure to bring home the latest intelligence of all sorts, especially of canvassing and electioneering. Jesse has the most complete collection of squibs in the country, and piques himself on his skill in detecting the writers.

He will bestow as many guesses, and bring forward as many proofs on occasion of a hand-bill signed "Fair-Play," or a song subscribed "True-Blue," as ever were given to that abiding riddle, the authorship of Junius—and very likely come as near the mark.

Ah, the dear home ! A runaway there too ! I may as well tell the story now, although very sorry to have to record so sad an act of delinquency of my clients the boys, as an elopement from our own premises.

Henry Hamilton—that ever a parish boy, offspring of a tailor and a cook-maid, should have an appellation so fitted to the hero of a romance ! Henry Hamilton had lived with us for three years and upwards as man of all work, part waterer of my geraniums, sole feeder of May, the general favourite and factotum of the family. Being an orphan with no home but the workhouse, no friend but the overseer, at whose recommendation he was engaged, he seemed to belong to us in an especial manner, to have a more than common claim on protection and kindness. Henry was just the boy to discover and improve this feeling ;—quick, clever, capable, subtle, and supple ; exceedingly agreeable in manner, and pleasant in appearance. He had a light pliant form, with graceful delicate limbs like a native Indian ; a dark but elegant countenance sparkling with expression ; and a remarkable variety and versatility of talent. Nothing came amiss to him. In one week he hath been car-

penter, blacksmith, painter, tinker, glazier, tailor, cobbler, and wheelwright. These were but a few of his multifarious accomplishments ; he would beat Harriet at needle-work, and me in gardening. All the parish was in the habit of applying to him on emergency, and I never knew him decline a job in my life. He hath mended a straw bonnet and a smoke-jack, cleaned a clock, constructed a donkey-cart, and dressed a doll.

With all these endowments, Henry was scarcely so good a servant as a duller boy. Besides that he undertook so many things that full half of them were of necessity left unfinished, he was generally to seek when wanted, and after sending a hue and cry round the neighbourhood, would be discovered at the blacksmith's or the collar-maker's, intently occupied on some devices of his own. Then he had been praised for invention, till he thought it necessary to display that brilliant quality on all occasions, by which means we, who are exceedingly simple, oldfashioned, matter-of-fact people, were constantly posed by new-fangled novelties, which nobody but the artist could use, or quips and quiddities of no use whatever. Thus we had fastenings for boxes that would not open, and latches for gates that refused to shut, bellows of a new construction that no mortal could blow, and traps that caught fingers instead of rats ; May was nearly choked by an improved slip, and

my white Cammelia killed outright by an infallible wash for insects.

Notwithstanding these mishaps, we all liked Henry ; his master liked his sportsmanship, his skill and boldness in riding, and the zeal with which he would maintain the honour of his own dogs right or wrong ; his mistress liked his civility and good humour ; Harriet felt the value of his alert assistance ; and I had a real respect for his resource. In the village he was less a favourite ; he looked down on the other boys, and the men, although amused by his cleverness, looked down upon him.

At last he unfortunately met with a friend of his own age in a clever apprentice, who arrived at our neighbour the baker's from the good town of B——. This youngster, " for shortness called " Bill, was a thorough town boy, you might see at a glance that he had been bred in the streets. He was a bold sturdy lad, with a look compounded of great impudence and a little slyness, and manners altogether characterised by the former of these amiable qualities. His voice was a shout, his walk a swagger, and his knock at the door a bounce that threatened to bring the house about our ears. The very first time that I saw him he was standing before our court with a switch in his hand, with which he was alternately menacing May, who, nothing daunted, returned his attack by an incessant bark, and demolishing a superb

crown imperial. Never was a more complete *mauvais sujet*.

This audacious urchin most unfortunately took a great fancy to Henry, which Henry, caught by the dashing assurance of his manner, most unluckily returned. They became friends after the fashion of Orestes and Pylades, or Damon and Pythias, fought for each other, lied for each other, and, finally, ran away with each other. The reason for Bill's evasion was manifest, his conduct having been such that his master had been compelled to threaten him with Bridewell and the tread-mill; but why Henry, who, although his invention had latterly taken a decided bent towards that branch of ingenuity called mischief, might still have walked quietly out of the street door with a good character in his pocket, should choose to elope from the garret window, is best known to himself. Off they set upward—that is to say Londonward, the common destination of your country youths who sally forth to try their fortune. Forth they set, and in about a week they were followed by a third runaway, a quiet simple modest-looking lad, a sort of hanger-on to the other two, and an apprentice to our worthy neighbour the carpenter. Poor Ned! we were sorry for him; he was of some promise as a cricketer—(by the way, Bill never went near the ground, which I always thought a bad sign;)—Ned would really have made a good cricketer,



not a brilliant hitter, but an excellent stopper of the ball ; one of your safe steady players, whom there is no putting out. Nobody ever dreamt of his running away. We all knew that he was a little idle, and that he was a sort of follower of Bill's—But Ned to decamp ! He must have gone out of pure imitation, just as geese waddle into a pond in single file, or as one sheep or pig will follow another through a gap in the hedge ;—sheer imitation ! A notable example of the harm that one town-bred youth will work in a country village ! Go he did, and back he is come, poor fellow ! thin as a herring, and ragged as a colt, a mere moral to tag a tale withal. He has not had a day's work since he left his good master, nor, to judge from his looks, a sufficient meal. His account of the other two worthies is just what I expected. Henry, after many ups and downs, (during one of which he was within half an inch of being a soldier, that is to say, he *did* enlist, and wanted only that much of the standard,) is now in a good place, and likely to do well. His *fidus Achates*, Bill, has disappeared from London as he did from the country. No one knows what is become of him. For my own part, I never looked for any good from a lad, who, to say nothing of his graver iniquities, kept away from the cricket ground, thrashed my flowers, and tried to thrash May.

The flourishing and well-accustomed Rose Inn has lost its comely mistress, a harmless, blameless, kindly-

tempered woman, with a pleasant smile and a gentle voice, who withered suddenly in the very strength and pride of womanhood, and died lamented by high and low. She is succeeded in the management of that respectable hostelry by two light-footed and light-hearted lasses of twelve and thirteen, who skip about after their good bustling father with an officious civility that the guests find irresistible, and conduct the housekeeping with a frugality and forethought beyond their years.

The white house, with the limes in front, has also lost, though not by death, our good vicar and his charming family. They have taken possession of their own pretty dwelling; and their removal has given me an opportunity of becoming intimately acquainted with all the crooks and turnings, the gates, ponds, and pollards, of the vicarage lane;—a walk which on that event I suddenly discovered to be one of the prettiest in the neighbourhood.

Ah! here is Lizzy half leaning half riding on the gate of her own court, looking very demure, and yet quite ripe for a frolic. Lizzy has in some measure outgrown her beauty; which desirable possession does very often run away from a young lady at six years old, and come back again at twelve. I think that such will be the case here. She is still a very nice little girl, quick, clever, active and useful; goes to school; cooks upon occasion her father's dinner; and is beyond all comparison the

handiest little waiting woman in the parish. She is waiting now to speak to her playmate and companion the wheelwright's daughter, who with all her mother's attentive politeness is running down the street with an umbrella and her clogs, to fence their lodger, Mrs. Hay, from the ill effects of a summer shower. I think that we have had about a dozen drops of rain, and where they came from no mortal can guess, for there is not a cloud in the sky; but there goes little Mary with a grave civility, a curtsying earnestness that would be quite amusing in so young a child, if the feeling that dictated the attention were not so good and so real, and the object so respectable.

Mrs. Hay is a widow, a slight delicate elderly person, in a well-preserved black silk gown, a neat quiet bonnet never in fashion, nor ever wholly out, snow-white stockings, and a handsome gray shawl—her invariable walking costume. She makes no visits; cultivates no acquaintance; and seldom leaves her neat quiet room except to glide into church on a Sunday, and to take a short walk on some fine spring morning. No one knows precisely what Mrs. Hay's station has been, but every body feels that she is an object of interest and respect.

Now up the hill! past the white cottage of the little mason, whiter than ever, for it has just been beautified; past the darker but still prettier dwelling of the lieutenant, mantled with sweet-briar and honeysuckles, and

fruit trees of all sorts; one turn to look at the landscape so glowingly bright and green, with its affluence of wood dappled with villages, and gentlemen's seats, the wide spreading town of B—— lying in the distance with its spires and towers, the Thames and the Kennett winding along their lines of light like glittering serpents, and the O—— hills rising beyond;—one glance at that glorious prospect, and here we are at the top of the hill, on the open common, where the air is so fresh and pure, and the sun shines so gaily on the golden furze.

Did I say that there were no alterations in our Village? Could I so utterly forget the great doings on the top of the hill, where by dint of whitening and sash-windowing and fresh-dooring the old ample farm-house has become a very genteel-looking residence? Or the cottage on the common opposite, or rather the two cottages, which have by a similar transmogrification been laid into one, and now form, with their new cart-shed, their double garden and their neat paling, so pretty and comfortable a home for the respectable mistress of the little Village School and her industrious husband? How could I forget that cottage, whose inhabitants I see so often and like so well!

Mr. Moore is the greatest market-gardener in the parish; and leads his donkey chaise through the street every summer afternoon, vending fruit and vegetables, and followed by a train of urchins of either sex. Some

who walk boldly up to the cart, halfpenny customers, who ask questions and change their minds, balance between the merits of cherries and gooseberries, and gravely calculate under what form of fruit they may get most eating for their money \*. These are the rich. Others, the shy, who stand aloof, are pennyless elves, silent petitioners, who wait about with longing looks, till some child-loving purchaser or Mr. Moore himself, unable to withstand those pleading eyes, flings them a dole, and gives them the double delight of the fruit and the scramble.

The dear cricket ground! Even at this hour there are boys loitering about that beloved scene of evening pastime, not quite playing, but idling and lounging, and looking as if they longed to play. My friend the little Hussar with his blue jacket and his immovable gravity is the quietest of the party, and Ben Kirby, youngest

\* It is amusing to see how very early poor children become acquainted with the rate of exchange between the smaller denominations of coin and the commodities—such as cakes, nuts, and gingerbread—which they purchase. No better judge of the currency question than a country brat of three years old. Lizzy, before she could speak plain, was so knowing in cakes and halfpence, that it was a common amusement with the people at the shop where she dealt to try to cheat her, and watch her excessive anger when she detected the imposition. She was sure to find them out, and was never pacified till she had all that was due to her.

brother of Joe, (I think I have spoken of Ben before,) by far the noisiest. Joe no longer belongs to the boy's side, having been promoted to play with the men; and Ben has succeeded to his post as chief and leader of the youngsters. Joe is a sort of person to make himself happy anywhere, but I suspect that he has not at present gained much pleasure by the exchange. It is always a very equivocal advantage when a person is removed from the first place in one class, to the lowest in the rank just above; and in the present instance poor Joe seems to me to have gained little by his preferment except the honour of being Fag general to the whole party. His feelings must be something like those of a provincial actor transplanted to the London boards, who finds himself on the scene of his ambition indeed, but playing Richmond instead of Richard, Macduff instead of Macbeth. Joe, however, will doubtless work his way up, and in the mean time Ben fills his abdicated throne with eminent ability.

Jem Eusden, his quondam rival, is lost to the cricket ground altogether. He is gone forth to see the world. An uncle of his mother's, a broker by profession, resident in Shoe-Lane, came into this neighbourhood to attend a great auction, and was so caught by Jem's scholarship that he carried him off to London and placed him with a hoxier in Cheapside, where he is to this hour engaged in tying up gloves and stockings, and carrying out par-

cels. His grand-uncle describes him as much improved by the removal ; and his own letters to Ben (for since they have been parted they are become great friends) confirm the assertion. He writes by every opportunity, full as often I should think as once a quarter ; and his letters give by far the best accounts of the Lord Mayor's day, as well as of the dwarfs, giants and other monsters on show in London, of any that arrive in these parts. He is critical on the Christmas Pantomimes, descriptive on the Panoramas, and his narrative of the death of the elephant (whose remains his good kinsman the broker took him to visit) was so pathetic that it made the whole village cry. All the common is in admiration of Jem's genius, always excepting his friend Ben Kirby, who laughs at every thing, even his correspondent's letters, and hath been heard to insinuate that the most eloquent morceaux are " bits out of newspapers." Ben is a shrewd wag and a knowing ; but in this instance I think that he is mistaken. I hold Jem's flights for original, and suspect that the young gentleman will turn out literary.

## THE TENANTS OF BEECHGROVE.

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THOSE who live in a thickly inhabited, and very pretty country, close to a large town, within a morning's ride of London, and an easy distance from Bath, Cheltenham, and the sea, must lay their account, (especially if there be also excellent roads, and a capital pack of fox-hounds) on some of the evils which are generally found to counterbalance so many conveniences ; such as a most unusual dearness and scarcity of milk, cream, butter, eggs, and poultry—luxuries held proper to rural life,—a general corruption of domestics,—and, above all, a perpetual change and fluctuation of neighbours. The people of the higher class in this neighbourhood, are as mutable as the six-months denizens of Richmond, or Hampstead—mere birds of passage, who “ come like shadows, so depart.” If a resident of ten years ago, were, by any chance, to come here now, he would be in great luck if he found three faces of gentility that he could recognise. I do not mean to insinuate that faces in our parts wax old



or ugly sooner than elsewhere; but, simply, that they do not stay amongst us long enough to become old—that one after another, they vanish. All our mansions are let, or to be let. The old manorial Hall, where squire succeeded to squire from generation to generation, is cut down into a villa, or a hunting-lodge, and transferred season after season, from tenant to tenant, with as little remorse as if it were a lodging-house at Brighton. The lords of the soil are almost as universally absentees as if our fair county were part and parcel of the Sister Kingdom. The spirit of migration possesses the land. Nobody of any note, even talks of staying amongst us, that I have heard—except a speculating candidate for the next borough; and he is said to have given pretty intelligible hints that he shall certainly be off, unless he be elected. In short, we H——shire people are a generation of runaways.

As “out of evil cometh good,” one pleasant consequence of this incessant mutation has been the absence of that sort of prying and observation of which country neighbours used to be accused. No street even in London was freer from small gossiping. With us, they who were moving, or thinking of moving, had something else to do; and we, the few dull laggards, who remained fixed in our places, as stationary as directing posts, and pretty nearly as useless, were too much accustomed to the whirl, to take any great note of the passers by.

Yet, even amidst the general flitting, one abode gradually forced itself into notice, for the unrivalled rapidity of succession, with which tenant followed tenant,—the most admired and the most changeable of all. It was an exceedingly pretty inconvenient cottage,—a picture of a place,—with its French windows and verandahs, its trellis and porch covered with clematis and jessamine, its baby house conservatory, and its miniature lawn. It was situated in the midst of woody, winding lanes, lost as it were in the labyrinths of our rich and intricate country; with an open grove of noble beeches on one side of it, and a clear stream, crossed by a winding bridge, on the other.

In short, Beechgrove with all its pretty rusticities, its violets and primroses, and nightingales and turtle doves, was the very place in which to spend the honeymoon. It seemed a spot made expressly for brides and bridegrooms, doomed by the inexorable laws of fashion, to four weeks of connubial felicity, to get creditably weary of solitude and of each other.

Accordingly, couple after couple repaired to Beechgrove. The very postillions, whether from south or north, east or west, knew instinctively, where to deposit a new married pair. There was not so pretty a dove-cote within twenty miles. Here they came in quick succession, and we had a great amusement in watching them. A bridal party is generally very pleasant to look

at,—all white satin, and white lace, and white favours, and finery, and gaiety ! one likes every thing about it : the horses so sleek and prancing ; the carriages so ostentatiously new and grand ; the servants so full of conscious importance, parading and bustling, as proud of their master's splendour, as if they belonged to a Sheriff on Lord Mayor's day, or to a winning candidate at an election time ! Well ! they came, and they went, —the fashionable, the titled, the wealthy, and the plain, glad, as it seemed, to come, and certainly glad to go. One couple only remained a little beyond the allotted time. (N. B. that bride was remarkably pretty.) They lingered on ; she was charmed with Beechgrove, and they talked of wintering there, and re-engaged the house. But I don't know how it was ; she was a sweet pretty woman to be sure, but did not look over wise ; and it happened to her as to Cowley's Beauty in his " Chronicle " her reign was short

" One month, three days, and half an hour

" Judith held the sovereign power."

Her husband whisked her off to Paris at the end of five weeks.

They were succeeded by a man in the prime of life, and a woman in its very morning ; an elegant but most melancholy pair, who brought with them no bridal favours, no gay carriages, no proud servants, no titles,

no name. He was of a person splendidly beautiful—tall, stately, commanding ; of a regality of port, and a haughtiness of aspect almost defying, as if expecting enquiry and determined to look it down. It was only when gazing at his fair companion, that his bright eye softened, and his demeanour changed into the most gentle expression of tenderness and submission. He appeared devoted to her ; and would read to her on the lawn, ride with her, or drive her in a little open chaise for hours together. She, on the other hand, although receiving his attentions with unalterable sweetness, seemed best pleased to glide away alone, given up to her own thoughts,—sad thoughts, alas ! I fear they were !—to her cheerless prospects - and mournful recollections. She would walk with her bonnet in her hand, and her beautiful curls put back from her white temples, as if air were necessary to still their throbbing,—and she would so sigh ! Poor thing ! poor thing ! once she came to church, closely veiled, downcast, and trembling. She had forgotten the key of her own pew, and was invited by the vicar's lady into hers. And she went in, and knelt in the lowest place, and sate out great part of the service. But the sermon was affecting ; it spake of female frailty ; of the woman taken in adultery ; of sin and of forgiveness. She could not bear it, and left the church. She never entered it afterwards. Poor thing ! guilt was there, but shame and repentance were there

also. She was born for better things ; and shrank from the eye as if looks were swords.

Without any intention of watching this lovely downcast penitent—for most lovely she was !—it so happened that I met her frequently ; and although we never spoke, she grew so far familiarized to my passing her in the lanes, as not to start and tremble at my appearance, like a fluttered dove,—as was usual with her, on the sight of strangers. She would even stop to fondle my greyhound, Mayflower, who with the extraordinary instinct of her kind, had been attracted by her sweet countenance, and never failed to accost her. May and she were quite acquainted ; she had even learnt her name. We used to meet almost every day ; especially in one spot, which soon became as much her favourite, as it had long been mine.

About half a mile to the right of Beechgrove, a shady lane leads to a beautiful patch of woodland scenery,—the lingering remains of an ancient chase. Turfy sheepwalks intersect thick brakes of fern and holly, mingled with rich old thorns, and the light feathery birch, and surmounted by noble oaks and beeches, the growth of centuries. In one of the recesses of the wood, just opposite the deep clear pond, which lets the light so finely into this forest picture, stands a real cottage, rough, rude, irregular, mis-shapen ; with its hedged-in garden, and its well-stocked orchard ; all evidently

cribbed from the waste, and sufficiently spacious to give an air of unusual comfort to the rural dwelling. The cart-shed too and the faggot-pile, and the old horse grazing before the door, indicate a considerable portion of rustic prosperity.

In fact they are a thriving family. Charles North, the head of the house, is a jobbing gardener, whose services are in such request, that they are accorded somewhat in the manner of favours, and must be bespoken as long beforehand as the attendance of a first singer at a musical party. He is a fine athletic man, whose firm upright form, and bold, hale, lively visage contrast rather strangely the premature gray locks that hang around the latter. In manner, he is singularly agreeable, full of shrewdness and goodhumour, very merry, and a little arch; perceiving, instantly, the weaknesses of those with whom he converses, and humouring them as much from pliability of temper, and a natural sympathy, as from views of interest. The rogue is my factotum; and sees at a glance which hyacinth to prefer, and which geranium to admire. Good gardener as he is, I doubt if this be not the great secret of Charles North's popularity. Popular he is, that is certain; perhaps the most popular person of my acquaintance; quite good enough to please the wise, and not too good to alarm the gay; for the rest, an excellent husband and excellent father, a thoroughly sober and industrious man, except now

and then an outbreak at tide times, which commonly lasts for a day or two, and leaves him more ardently laborious than ever. One of the most enviable persons whom I have ever encountered, is Charles North in his blue apron.

He however is very seldom seen at his pleasant home. He trudges forth, whistling, at four o'clock every morning, and comes back, still whistling, about seven at night. The cottage at the wood side is quite populous enough without him. To say nothing of his ailing wife, who is what in a lady would be called nervous ; there were, at the time of which I speak, thirteen goodly children, from twenty years old, to eight months. Shall I give a catalogue? Yes. First, an eldest son, a baker, (for one of the protuberances which make the dwelling so picturesque, is a huge oven) Charles North, Junior,—tall and vigorous as his father,—a staid sober youth, who by dint of the small pox and a miraculous gravity, might pass for the father of the family himself. Then an eldest sister, stout and steady ; a home-keeping Martha North, acting as regent during her mother's illnesses, which know no pause ; deputy mistress, and deputy servant of the whole house. Then, a fine open-countenanced girl, her father in petticoats, parcel pickle, and parcel coquette,—who puts her hair in curl papers, and flirts with one half of the parish and romps with the other, as she carries her brother's bread round the coun-

try,—sole driver of the old white horse ; we have not a prettier black-eyed lass in the Village than Sally North. Then Tom, who goes to work with his father, and is at a word, Sally in breeches. Then there were four or five urchins, names unknown, who attended sundry seminaries, some for charity, some for pay. Then three or four others, sex unknown, imps in tattered frocks, dirty, noisy, healthy, and happy, who dabbled by the side of the pond with the ducks and geese, or helped the pigs to find acorns, in the wood. Last of all, the baby,—a rosy smiling brat, clean amidst all the dirt, and placid amidst all the uproar, who lived out of doors, like a gipsy, and might be seen in its little pink frock, stretching its round hardy limbs on the turf, or sitting in infantine state with its back propped against a tree, from morning to night, the general pet and plaything of the family.

This infant was evidently the attraction which drew the fair tenant of Beechgrove to this secluded spot. May and I used to dive into the recesses of the wood, scenery where you may almost realize the delicious creations of “*Comus*,” and “*As You Like It* ;” but *she* always paused at the cottage, always as near as possible to the baby. It was a child that, for mere childish beauty, would have been remarked amongst thousands. The square vigorous form ; the dimpled hands and feet, and elbows, so firm, so mottled, of so pure a carnation ; the fair open forehead, with little rings of brown hair



curling round it ; the large bright blue eye ; the delicate features ; and the sweet look of content, the passionless composure, which give a dignity to infant loveliness, would have made Mary North a model for Sir Joshua. No one ever passed without admiring the child, but on no one did her beauty produce such an effect as on this unhappy lady. She could not pass : she seemed to intend it sometimes ; but always stopped, and returned to her old station near the cottage.

Her object was, evidently, Mary. At first, she tried to talk to Mrs. North, to Martha, to the little ones that dabbled round the pond : but the effort was visibly painful ; and she soon desisted from it ; content to hang over the little girl, or to sit on the grass at her side, sometimes crying, sometimes with a heart-broken look, as if her tears were gone. The child's name, if accidentally pronounced, always occasioned a convulsive shuddering ; and one day, Mrs. North, unable to resist the curiosity excited by these extraordinary proceedings, said to her, " I fancy, Ma'am, for so young as you look, that you must have had a little Mary of your own !"— " Once," was the answer, with a burst of bitter grief, " once !"— " It's a sad affliction," pursued Mrs. North, " to bury a baby, especially the first. I lost mine, poor innocent ! but I have thought, since, how much happier she is than my Mary would be, if I was to die now, and leave her motherless in the wide world."—" Oh

my Mary ! my Mary ! my child ! my child !" cried the unhappy lady, and fell to the ground, in strong and obstinate convulsive fits.

She was conveyed home ; and came no more to the cottage by the wood-side. In a few days, Beechgrove was again vacant, and she was gone ;—leaving for Mrs. North a little green purse containing eighteen guineas, and some silver, and a small slip of paper, on which was written, " For your Mary, from a mother who *left* her child !"—Poor thing ! poor thing ! we have never heard of her since.

Mary North is now a rosy prattler, the life and joy of her humble home, the loveliest and gayest creature that ever lived. But, better than playing with her doll, better even than base-ball, or sliding, or romping, does she like to creep of an evening to her father's knee, and look at the well-hoarded purse, (not a shilling has been taken out,) and gaze, with a mysterious feeling of awe at her little heart, on the slip of uneven writing ; and hear, for the hundredth time, the story of the poor lady who was so good to Mary when she was a baby,—the beautiful lady of Beechgrove.

## EARLY RECOLLECTIONS.

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### THE FRENCH TEACHER.

It is now more than twenty years since I, a petted child of ten years old, born and bred in the country, and as shy as a hare, was sent to that scene of bustle and confusion, a London school. Oh what a change it was ! What a terrible change ! The good old nurse, and the sweet gentle mama, and the dear, dear papa, who in their several ways seemed to have no other object than that of spoiling me from morning to night,—to leave them and my own dear home for this strange new place, and these strange new people,—what a change ! And so many of them ! and children too ! Men and women I could have endured : but I had been a solitary child, and hated nothing so much as the din, the laughter, the shrill voices, and rapid motions of children. They fairly made me dizzy. I shall never forget the misery of the first two days, blushing to be looked at, dreading to be spoken to, shrinking like a sensitive plant from

the touch, ashamed to cry, and feeling as if I never could laugh again. I was really broken-hearted. These disconsolate feelings are not astonishing, even in recollection : the wonder is, that they so soon passed away. But every body was good and kind. There was just attention enough from the heads of the house, and a merciful neglect from the pupils.. In less than a week the poor wild bird was tamed. I could look without fear on the bright happy faces ; listen without starting to the clear high voices, even though they talked in French ; began to watch the ball and the battledore ; and felt something like an inclination to join in the sports. In short, I soon became an efficient member of the commonwealth ; as efficient as a quiet little girl of ten years old could be ; made a friend, provided myself with a school-mother, a fine tall blooming girl, who, having attained the dignity of the first class and the mature age of fourteen, already thought herself a young woman, under whose powerful protection I began to learn and unlearn, to acquire the habits and enter into the views of my companions, as well disposed to be idle as the best of them.

Nobody was less thought of in this respectable school than our respectable governess. She seldom came near us. Her post was to sit all day, nicely dressed, in a nicely furnished drawing-room, busy with some piece of delicate needle-work, receiving mamas, aunts, and god-

mamas, answering questions, and administering as much praise as she conscientiously could,—perhaps a little more. In the school-room she ruled, like other rulers, by ministers and delegates, of whom the French Teacher was the principal. When I first arrived, this high post was filled by the daughter of an *émigré* of distinction, a gentle drooping creature, who looked downward like a colombine, and was totally unequal to contend with twenty light-hearted and boisterous girls. She was the prettiest piece of melancholy that I have ever seen ; as pale as alabaster, with large black eyes, that seemed made for tears, and a voice “ far above singing.” I do not think she could chide ; she did not know how. Nobody could help loving a creature so mild and inoffensive ; and there was something, with this gentleness, of purity and dignity, that ensured our respect—it clung to her like a garment. She did her duty scrupulously, as far as instruction went, but left all other cares to the English Teacher,—a very different person, coarse and common as could be ; a better sort of nursery-maid ; one who from pure laziness would rather do things herself than take the trouble to see that they were done by another. Under her fosterage our evil habits thrived apace : she put away, and hid, and lied for us, till we became the most irregular and untidy generation that ever trod the floor of a school-room. All seemed fair in the sight of the governess ; and, whilst our drooping

lily Mademoiselle L. remained, all was quiet. But these happy days could not last long. She left us in the short peace of Amiens to join her parents in an attempt to recover some part of their property, in which, I am happy to say, she was successful ; whilst with her unlucky pupils the reign of king Log was succeeded by that of king Stork. The new French Teacher came ; a tall, majestic woman, between sixty and seventy, made taller by yellow slippers with long slender heels, such as I have never seen before or since. I cannot imagine how she could walk in them, though her way of moving scarcely deserved the name. Her mode of entering a room, or saluting a person, "*son abord*," as she called it, was a trip, a sort of quick mincing shuffle, ending in a low curtsy : her common motion was that of a snake, or a ghost, or her own long train, gliding quite inaudibly, in spite of her heels, whether on the Turkey carpet of the library, or the bare boards of the dancing-room. Her face was almost invisible, being concealed between a mannish kind of neckcloth, that tied in her chin, and an enormous cap, whose wide flaunting strip hung over her cheeks and eyes,—to say nothing of a huge pair of spectacles. What could be seen of the face was in a fine Roman style of beauty that answered to her figure ; beautiful, in spite of age, and cap-strip, and neckcloth, and spectacles ; lady-like, in spite of the high heels, the trip, the mantua-making vulgarity of

scissors and pincushion dangling outside of her gown, and such a pair of panniers within as have seldom been seen in these degenerate days of reticules and work-bags. Such was the outward woman of Madame. Her inner qualities were speedily developed. We soon found that, like "Goose Gibbie," she kept the hours of her flock; went to bed at nine o'clock, and rose at six; and, instead of trying to lose the sight and sound of children in books and drawings, and running away from the very thoughts of us the moment school-hours were over, as poor Mademoiselle L. used to do, Madame was content to keep us company all the day long; was never tired of us, tiresome as we were; and made no other difference between school-time and play-time than that of exchanging scolding for talking, long lessons for long stories. She superintended our sports; watched over the games of ball and battledore; reprimanded the awkward and the noisy; and finally insisted on translating our old forfeits of "Peter Piper," and "I love my love with an A," into their Gallic counterpart, "*Qui veut vendre le corbillon?*"

This was sufficiently irksome; but the worst was to come. Madame, all Parisian though she was, had the fidgety neatness of a Dutch woman, and was scandalized at our untidy habits. Four days passed in distant murmurs; an exercise book, found, to use her favourite word, "*trainant*" about the room, was thrown into the

fire, and a skipping-rope, which nearly overset her by entangling in her train, was tossed out of the window : but this was only the gathering of the wind before the storm. It was dancing-day ; we were all dressed and assembled, when Madame, provoked by some indication of latent disorder, some stray pinafore or pocket-handkerchief peeping from under the form that was meant to conceal it, instituted, much to our consternation, a general rummage through the house for things out of their places, which certainly comprised the larger half of our possessions. Every hole and corner were searched for contraband goods, and the collected mass thrown together in one stupendous pile in the middle of the school-room ; a pile that defies description or analysis. Bonnets, old and new, with strings and without, pelisses, tippets, parasols, unmatched shoes, halves of pairs of gloves, books tattered or whole, music in many parts, pincushions, petticoats, thimbles, frocks, sashes, dolls, portfolios, shuttlecocks, play-things, work-things, trumpery without end. The entire mass was to be apportioned amongst the different owners, and then affixed to their persons, after the fashion of some of Mr. Lancaster's punishments, though, to do Madame justice, the design, under her management, was altogether French. She had generously taken the most difficult part herself, and was much in the situation of the Princess in the Fairy Tale, who was put into a great



hall full of feathers, and ordered to select from the mingled heap those which belonged to every separate bird. Poor Madame ! she was worse off than the princess—she had no good Genius to help her—she did not even know the plumage of her little birds—sad refractory birds as ever beat their wings against a cage. Poor Madame ! Article after article was fished up from the mass, and held out to be owned in vain ; not a soul would claim such dangerous property : gloves looked about for hands to wear them ; slippers were like the famous glass one, and fitted nobody ; bonnets wanted heads ; dolls went a begging. Poor Madame ! Even when she found a name, it did her little service ; she had, to be sure, in ten years picked up some ten words of English,—but proper names ! she never came so near them in her life as old Bassompierre when he wrote In-nimthorpe for Kensington. Even if she made a distant approach to the sounds in pronunciation, she would never have recognised them when written ; it was two to one against her hitting on the initial letter. Nevertheless she did succeed, by dint of lucky guesses and questions which could not be parried, in apportioning quite sufficient to form a style of decoration more novel than elegant,—an order of demerit. Dictionaries suspended from the neck *en medaillon*, shawls tied round the waist *en ceinture*, unbound music pinned to the frock *en queue*, formed a slight part of our adornment ; not

one of us but had three or four of these appendages ; many had five or six. These preparations were intended to meet the eye of Madame's countryman, the French dancing-master, who would doubtless assist in supporting her authority, and in making us thoroughly ashamed. She did not know that before his arrival we were to pass an hour in an exercise of another kind, standing on one leg, like geese upon a common, or facing to right and left, under the command of a drill-sergeant. The man of scarlet was ushered in ; and it is difficult to say whether the professor of marching or the improver of discipline looked most astonished : the culprits, I am afraid, supported by numbers and amused by the ridiculous appearance of their corps, were not so much disconcerted as they should have been. Madame began a very voluble explanatory harangue ; but she was again unfortunate,—the sergeant did not understand French. She attempted to translate—" It is, Sare, que ces dames, dat dese Miss be des traineuses." This clear and intelligible sentence producing no other visible effect than a shake of the head, Madame desired the nearest culprit to tell "*ce soldat là*" what she had said, and to inform her what he could possibly be come for. Our interpreter was puzzled in her turn, as much puzzled as Pistol's boy when bidden to construe "*fer ferret* and *firk*" to Monsieur le Fer. She had to find English for *traineuses* (no dictionary word ! I believe Madame in-

vented it expressly for our use), and French for drill-sergeant. She got through her difficulties vastly well, called him of the red coat a walking-master, and confessed frankly that we were in disgrace. The sergeant was a man of bowels ; besides he hated the French : he declared that " it made his blood boil to see so many free-born English girls domineered over by a natural enemy," and as he said this he eyed poor Madame as fiercely as if she had been a member of the Legion of Honour : finally he insisted that we could not march with such incumbrances ; which declaration being done into French all at once by half a dozen eager tongues, the trappings were removed, and the experiment ended without any very sensible improvement.

Inauspicious as the beginning was, in a short time we did improve ; our habits became more regular, we began to feel the comfort of order, and we began to like Madame. She lived with us and for us, like a family nurse, or a good old grandmama (only that she did not spoil us)—she had no other occupation, no other thought, scarcely another friend in the world ; and she had herself an aptness to love which could not fail to attach young hearts. It was touching to see that respectable woman, homeless and desolate in her old age, clinging to children for society and comfort, joining in their pursuits and amusements, and bringing down her own thoughts and feelings to their comprehension. Her

youth of mind and simplicity of heart kept her happy ; I doubt whether grown people would have suited her so well. She entered thoroughly and heartily into our little schemes, and had more of her own than all the school put together. Never found mortal such pleasure in small surprises, innocent secrets, and mysterious gifts. Cherries dropped in our path like fairy favours ; sweet-peas and mignonette springing up as if by magic in our little gardens ; purses netted under the table and smuggled into our pockets no one knew how ; birth-day *fêtes* gotten up as secretly as state conspiracies—these were her delights. She was cross sometimes, and strict enough always ; but we loved Madame, and Madame loved us. I really think she would have been one of the happiest creatures in the world, but for a strange aversion which she unluckily took to a very charming young lady, a woman of genius and a poetess, who succeeded to the functions of the stupid English Teacher. The dislike was mutual. Never were two better haters. Their relative situation had probably something to do with it ; and yet it was wonderful that two such excellent persons should so thoroughly detest each other. Miss R.'s aversion was of the cold, phlegmatic, contemptuous, provoking sort ; she kept aloof and said nothing : Madame's was acute, fiery, and loquacious ; she not only hated Miss R., but hated for her sake knowledge, and literature, and wit, and, above all, poetry, which

she denounced as something fatal and contagious, like the plague. I shall never forget her horror when she detected one of her favourites in the act of translating a stanza of Tasso into something that looked like verse ; if she had caught her committing forgery, her lamentations could not have been more indignantly pathetic. What would she say now ?

I have already mentioned with honour Madame's high heels. They were once put to an unexpected use. She had been ill, and had gone into lodgings on the other side of London, to be near her favourite physician. We soon found a relaxation of discipline ; our poetess piqued herself upon managing us in a different way from her rival (she never suspected that we managed her) ; besides which she had a most comfortable habit of abstraction, and seldom saw what passed before her eyes. The business of the school went on as usual ; but our amusements were left to ourselves, and a dramatic fury raged high amongst us. Our first performance was Pizarro, that delight of children. In this choice we had one trifling difficulty, the absence of the printed play ; but most of the actors had seen the piece, and we managed it by memory and invention. I should like to see a variorum edition of our Pizarro. The Spanish hero himself had never seen the tragedy ; but he was a very clever little Irish girl, not more than a foot shorter than Elvira, and, being well instructed in the

spirit of the part, blustered through the tyrant very creditably, excepting one mistake, that of regularly ordering the soldiers to shoot Rolla three scenes before his time. The error was pardonable. Every body sympathised with Pizarro in thinking the sooner Rolla was out of pain the better. His sufferings were exquisite. He was a fine well-grown personable girl, but labouring under such a melancholy want of words and ideas, that he felt and inflicted in a higher degree the sort of distress which is so often caused by stammering : we could no more prevail on him to relinquish his impracticable part, than a stammerer can be persuaded to abandon the unutterable word. Elvira we chose for her especial gift in scolding, her natural shrewishness ; and she did not disappoint us : she acted like a virago born, the pride and glory of the play. As to Cora, I did her myself, after an exceedingly original fashion. I recollect one trait. I ~~did~~ not like going mad ; it was troublesome, and I did not well know how to set about it,—fainting was much easier ; so I fainted, and had the pleasure of being pulled by the arms across the room, with my heels dragging along the floor, by one of our stage footmen ; an operation in which I found so much amusement, that I got a part of the audience (the little girls, the demure, and the stupid,) to encore my swoon.

Our next performance was Feudal Times, induced by the mistake of a silly maid, who had smuggled that

pageant into the house instead of Pizarro. We performed this entertainment to the letter, only leaving out the songs, the scenery, and the processions. Altogether Feudal Times did not go off like Pizarro; the zest of suspense and unexpectedness was wanting; every body knew what was to come next; no delightful blunders, no happy mistakes, no tragedy in our comedy, and far too little comedy in our tragedy; it was as dull as a lesson, and the run would have been short. We had already begun to turn our attention to a stray copy of Deaf and Dumb, when an unlucky accident put an entire stop to our dramatic career. In the machinery of Feudal Times one part seemed indispensable to the story. The heroine, a lady Claribel, is picked up out of a moat by a certain fisherman called Walter, into which moat she had been precipitated by the same Walter's sawing asunder a draw-bridge, which her oppressor, the baron, was defending against her lover. This we contrived almost as notably as the wall and moonshine were managed in Bottom's play, by tying together two long high forms, which Walter, seated tailor-fashion in a short low form, turned topsy-turvy, to resemble a boat, divided with a knife, catching hold at the same time of the lady Claribel, and pushing off with her to her lover, who stood on the chalked line which we called the bank. Four afternoons was this manœuvre adroitly performed: on the fifth an over-eager combatant lost his balance, and fell over just

as the bridge was sawing asunder; in falling he caught at the baron's white frock, who, overset in his turn, clung to the bridge, and down they came, vassal, baron, and bridge, together with the fair lady Claribel, full on the unlucky boat and the unfortunate boatman. The crash was tremendous. An universal scream from actors and spectators soon brought Miss R. to the scene, and disturbed the tranquil course of Mrs. \*\*'s embroidery. The mischief was less than might have been expected; a few bruises, one broken form, and two torn frocks; but the fright, the din, and the clatter, made too deep an impression to be overcome; the drama was instantly proscribed, Feudal Times thrown on the fire, and Deaf and Dumb put under lock and key.

When once however the theatrical fever is thoroughly excited, it is not easily allayed, especially if heightened by a prohibition. We were just on the point of actual rebellion, and had contrived a plot for regaining Deaf and Dumb, when a turn was given to our ideas by one of the confederates going to the opera, and coming back with her head full of a Scottish divertisement and the ballet of Orpheus and Eurydice. We hesitated a long time which to choose; to have one we were determined. A ballet was not a play; there was no edict against dancing; and, as the Grecian and Scottish parties ran high, we boldly resolved to blend the two stories into one. "Rather improbable, to be sure," said our ma-



nager, "but not impossible. No reason on earth why Orpheus might not go to Scotland, in search of Eurydice; we must make that understood in the bills. The ballet will be quite as intelligible one way as the other." Quite. The union of twenty plots would not have puzzled our ballet mistress; the confusion of her brain defied increase. I cannot attempt a minute detail of our performance. Venus—for we enlisted the whole corps of gods and goddesses in our service—Venus, a black-haired brown gipsy, rather quick-witted than beautiful, slid about in a pasteboard car, which she pushed forward much as a child manages a go-cart, driving cruelly over her paper doves, and stooping every moment to pick them up and set them flying again. Cupid, the *cidevant* Pizarro, was the charm of the piece, full of grace and playfulness, he managed his shining wings with great address, and his bow and arrows still better. One of his feats was the demolition of a paste-board fortress, which we had erected across one corner of the room, just large enough to contain the Scottish heroine, and ingeniously contrived to keep together by strings held in her hand, which she dropped as soon as Cupid drew his bow, and sprang away from her prison. This piece of machinery was our principal attempt in that line; but we had made great advances in costume since the luckless night when the baron was brought to the ground by a pull at his white frock. Our Highland lasses had

muslin aprons bound with tartan ribands, the right Highland dress of the Opera House ; Jupiter had a rich pelisse ; and Pluto a beard—a fine tuft of bear-skin docked by our manager from her own fur tippet. This conscious splendour inspired us with a desire for a more numerous audience. We invited two or three young ladies of the neighbourhood, who came to take lessons in dancing ; Miss R. too we asked, the parlour-boarders, and the good old housekeeper. The evening arrived, the spectators were seated, unexpectedly reinforced by Mrs. \*\*, in high good humour ; and we danced on in triumphant confusion till we came to the grand scene of the infernal regions. We had been at some loss as to the management of the classical Hell. Even our undoubting manager was posed. Fire seemed to our simple apprehensions a necessary element. The Furies must have torches. No dispensing with that engine of horror. Accordingly we erected a sort of artificial rock-work, composed of tables, stools, and trunks of unequal height, over which was flung a large covering of canvass. Towards the centre of this machine we placed a saucer full of burning spirits of wine, emitting much such a flame as I have seen issue at Christmas from a minced-pie floated with burning brandy. Our orchestra was playing “ The Soldier Tired ;” the whole dramatis personæ, gods and mortals, Greeks and Scots were assembled on the stage ; Orpheus was casting his memorable

look back on Eurydice; and the Furies were lighting their torches at the blazing spirits—when the folding doors flew back, and Madame appeared in the opening, muffled in white drapery, motionless for a moment, and then gliding gently in, like another Castle Spectre. One of the Furies in astonishment at this apparition, dropped her torch, and set fire to the canvass covering just as Madame reached the rock-work. The flame caught her eye, and she dexterously whisked off her yellow slipper, and tapped out the fire with its slender high heel. I still seem to hear the quick clear sound of those taps. She then gracefully resumed her shoe and her tripping motion, and glided up to Mrs. \*\*, with her usual mincing pace. So ended our ballet. We crowded round our dear old friend, and thought no more of Orpheus and Eurydice.

## WALKS IN THE COUNTRY.

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### THE COPSE.

APRIL 18th.—Sad wintery weather; a north-east wind; a sun that puts out one's eyes, without affording the slightest warmth; dryness that chaps lips and hands like a frost in December; rain that comes chilling and arrowy like hail in January; nature at a dead pause; no seeds up in the garden; no leaves out in the hedgerows; no cowslips swinging their pretty bells in the fields; no nightingales in the dingles; no swallows skimming round the great pond; no cuckoos (that ever I should miss that rascally sonneteer!) in any part! Nevertheless there is something of a charm in this wintery spring, this putting-back of the seasons. If the flower-clock must stand still for a month or two, could it choose a better time than that of the primroses and violets? I never remember (and for such gauds my memory, if not very good for aught of wise or useful, may be trusted) such an affluence of the one or such a duration of the

other. Primrosy is the epithet which this year will retain in my recollection. Hedge, ditch, meadow, field, even the very paths and highways, are set with them ; but their chief *habitat* is a certain copse, about a mile off, where they are spread like a carpet, and where I go to visit them rather oftener than quite comports with the dignity of a lady of mature age. I am going thither this very afternoon, and May and her company are going too.

This Mayflower of mine is a strange animal. Instinct and imitation make in her an approach to reason which is sometimes almost startling. She mimics all that she sees us do, with the dexterity of a monkey and far more of gravity and apparent purpose ; cracks nuts and eats them ; gathers currants and severs them from the stalk with the most delicate nicety ; filches and munches apples and pears ; is as dangerous in an orchard as a schoolboy ; smells to flowers ; smiles at meeting ; answers in a pretty lively voice when spoken to, (sad pity that the language should be unknown !) and has greatly the advantage of us in a conversation, inasmuch as our meaning is certainly clear to her ;—all this and a thousand amusing prettinesses, (to say nothing of her canine feat of bringing her game straight to her master's feet, and refusing to resign it to any hand but his) does my beautiful greyhound perform untaught, by the mere effect of imitation and sagacity. Well, May, at the

end of the coursing season, having lost Brush, our old spaniel, her great friend, and the blue greyhound Mariette, her comrade and rival, both of which four-footed worthies were sent out to keep for the summer, began to find solitude a weary condition, and to look abroad for company. Now it so happened that the same suspension of sport which had reduced our little establishment from three dogs to one, had also dispersed the splendid kennel of a celebrated courser in our neighbourhood, three of whose finest young dogs came home to "their walk" (as the sporting phrase goes) at the collar-makers in our village. May, accordingly, on the first morning of her solitude (she had never taken the slightest notice of her neighbours before, although they had sojourned in our street upwards of a fortnight,) bethought herself of the timely resource offered to her by the vicinity of these canine *beaux*, and went up boldly and knocked at their stable door, which was already very commodiously on the half-latch. The three dogs came out with much alertness and gallantry, and May, declining apparently to enter their territories, brought them off to her own. This manœuvre has been repeated every day, with one variation: of the three dogs, the first a brindle, the second a yellow, and the third a black, the two first only are now admitted to walk or consort with her, and the last, poor fellow, for no fault that I can discover except May's caprice, is driven away not only by the fair lady, but

even by his old companions—is, so to say, sent to Coventry. Of her two permitted followers, the yellow gentleman, Saladin by name, is decidedly the favourite. He is indeed, May's shadow, and will walk with me whether I choose or not. It is quite impossible to get rid of him unless by discarding Miss May also;—and to accomplish a walk in the country without her, would be like an adventure of Don Quixote without his faithful squire Sancho.

So forth we set, May and I, and Saladin and the brindle; May and myself walking with the sedateness and decorum befitting our sex and age (she is five years old this grass, rising six)—the young things, for the soldan and the brindle are (not meaning any disrespect) little better than puppies, frisking and frolicking as best pleased them.

Our route lay for the first part along the sheltered quiet lanes which lead to our old habitation; a way never trodden by me without peculiar and home-like feelings, full of the recollections, the pains and pleasures of other days. But we are not to talk sentiment now;—even May would not understand that maudlin language. We must get on. What a wintery hedgerow this is for the eighteenth of April! Primrosy, to be sure, abundantly spangled with those stars of the earth,—but so bare, so leafless, so cold! The wind whistles through the brown boughs as in winter. Even the early elder

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shoots, which do make an approach to springiness, look brown, and the small leaves of the woodbine, which have also ventured to peep forth, are of a sad purple, frost-bitten, like a dairy-maid's elbows on a snowymorning. The very birds, in this season of pairing and building, look chilly and uncomfortable, and their nests!—" Oh Saladin! come away from the hedge! Don't you see that what puzzles you and makes you leap up in the air is a redbreast's nest? Don't you see the pretty speckled eggs? Don't you hear the poor hen calling as it were for help? Come here this moment, sir!" And by good luck Saladin (who for a paynim has tolerable qualities) comes, before he has touched the nest, or before his playmate the brindle, the less manageable of the two, has espied it.

Now we go round the corner and cross the bridge, where the common, with its clear stream winding between clumps of elms, assumes so park-like an appearance. Who is this approaching so slowly and majestically, this square bundle of petticoat and cloke, this road-waggon of a woman? It is, it must be Mrs. Sally Mearing, the completest specimen within my knowledge of farmeresses (may I be allowed that innovation in language?) as they were. It can be nobody else.

Mrs. Sally Mearing, when I first became acquainted with her, occupied, together with her father, (a superannuated man of ninety), a large farm very near our



former habitation. It had been anciently a great manor-farm or court-house, and was still a stately substantial building, whose lofty halls and spacious chambers gave an air of grandeur to the common offices to which they were applied. Traces of gilding might yet be seen on the pannels which covered the walls, and on the huge carved chimney pieces which rose almost to the ceilings; and the marble tables and the inlaid oak staircase still spoke of the former grandeur of the court. Mrs. Sally corresponded well with the date of her mansion, although she troubled herself little with its dignity. She was thoroughly of the old school, and had a most comfortable contempt for the new; rose at four in winter and summer, breakfasted at six, dined at eleven in the forenoon, supped at five, and was regularly in bed before eight, except when the hay-time or the harvest imperiously required her to sit up till sunset,—a necessity to which she submitted with no very good grace. To a deviation from these hours, and to the modern iniquities of white aprons, cotton stockings, and muslin handkerchiefs (Mrs. Sally herself always wore check, black worsted, and a sort of yellow compound which she was wont to call *susy*), together with the invention of drill ploughs and threshing machines, and other agricultural novelties, she failed not to attribute all the mishaps or misdoings of the whole parish. The last-mentioned discovery especially aroused her indignation. Oh to hear

her descant on the merits of the flail, wielded by a stout right arm, such as she had known in her youth (for by her account there was as great a deterioration in bones and sinews as in the other implements of husbandry,) was enough to make the very inventor break his machine. She would even take up her favourite instrument, and thrash the air herself by way of illustrating her argument, and, to say truth, few men in these degenerate days could have matched the stout brawny muscular limb which Mrs. Sally displayed at sixty-five.

In spite of this contumacious rejection of agricultural improvements, the world went well with her at Court-Farm. A good landlord, an easy rent, incessant labour, unremitting frugality, and excellent times, ensured a regular though moderate profit; and she lived on, grumbling and prospering, flourishing and complaining, till two misfortunes befell her at once—her father died, and her lease expired. The loss of her father, although a bedridden man, turned of ninety, who could not in the course of nature have been expected to live long, was a terrible shock to a daughter, who was not so much younger as to be without fears for her own life, and who had besides been so used to nursing the good old man, and looking to his little comforts, that she missed him as a mother would miss an ailing child. The expiration of the lease was a grievance and a puzzle of a

different nature. Her landlord would have willingly retained his excellent tenant, but not on the terms on which she then held the land, which had not varied for fifty years : so that poor Mrs. Sally had the misfortune to find rent rising and prices sinking both at the same moment—a terrible solecism in political œconomy. Even this, however, I believe she would have endured, rather than have quitted the house where she was born, and to which all her ways and notions were adapted, had not a priggish steward, as much addicted to improvement and reform as she was to precedent and established usages, insisted on binding her by lease to spread a certain number of loads of chalk on every field. This tremendous innovation, for never had that novelty in manure whitened the crofts and pightles of Court-Farm, decided her at once. She threw the proposals into the fire, and left the place in a week.

Her choice of a habitation occasioned some wonder and much amusement in our village world. To be sure, upon the verge of seventy, an old maid may be permitted to dispense with the more rigid punctilio of her class, but Mrs. Sally had always been so tenacious on the score of character, so very a prude, so determined an avoider of the “men folk,” (as she was wont contemptuously to call them,) that we all were conscious of something like astonishment, on finding that she and her little handmaiden had taken up their abode in one

end of a spacious farm-house belonging to the bluff old bachelor, George Robinson of the Lea. Now farmer Robinson was quite as notorious for his aversion to petticoated things, as Mrs. Sally for her hatred to the unfeathered bipeds who wear doublet and hose, so that there was a little astonishment in that quarter too, and plenty of jests, which the honest farmer speedily silenced, by telling all who joked on the subject that he had given his lodger fair warning, that, let people say what they would, he was quite determined not to marry her; so that, if she had any views that way, it would be better for her to go elsewhere. This declaration, which must be admitted to have been more remarkable for frankness than civility, made, however, no ill impression on Mrs. Sally. To the farmer's she went, and at his house she lives still, with her little maid, her tabby cat, a decrepit sheep-dog, and much of the lumber of Court-Farm, which she could not find in her heart to part from. There she follows her old ways and her old hours, untempted by matrimony, and unassailed (as far as I hear) by love or by scandal, with no other grievance than an occasional dearth of employment for herself and her young lass, (even pewter dishes do not always want scouring,) and now and then a twinge of the rheumatism.

Here she is, that good relique of the olden time—for, in spite of her whims and prejudices, a better and a

kinder woman never lived—here she is, with the hood of her red cloke pulled over her close black bonnet of that silk which once (it may be presumed) was fashionable, since it is still called mode, and her whole stout figure huddled up in a miscellaneous and most substantial covering of thick petticoats, gowns, aprons, shawls, and clokes,—a weight which it requires the strength of a thresher to walk under—here she is with her square honest visage and her loud frank voice ;—and we hold a pleasant disjointed chat of rheumatisms and early chickens, bad weather, and hats with feathers in them ;—the last exceedingly sore subject being introduced by poor Jane Davies, (a cousin of Mrs. Sally,) who, passing us in a beaver bonnet on her road from school, stopped to drop her little curtsy, and was soundly scolded for her civility. Jane, who is a gentle, humble, smiling lass, about twelve years old, receives so many rebukes from her worthy relative, and bears them so meekly, that I should not wonder if they were to be followed by a legacy : I sincerely wish they may. Well, at last we said goodbye ; when, on inquiring my destination, and hearing that I was bent to the ten-acre copse, (part of the farm which she ruled so long,) she stopped me to tell a dismal story of two sheep-stealers who sixty years ago were found hidden in that copse, and only taken after great difficulty and resistance, and the maiming of a peace-officer.—“ Pray don’t go there,

Miss! For mercy's sake don't be so venturesome! Think if they should kill you!" were the last words of Mrs. Sally.

Many thanks for her care and kindness! But without being at all fool-hardy in general, I have no great fear of the sheep-stealers of sixty years ago. Even if they escaped hanging for that exploit, I should greatly doubt their being in case to attempt another. So on we go: down the short shady lane, and out on the pretty retired green, shut in by fields and hedge-rows, which we must cross to reach the copse. How lively this green nook is to-day, half covered with cows and horses and sheep! And how glad these frolicsome greyhounds are to exchange the hard gravel of the high road for this pleasant short turf, which seems made for their gambols! How beautifully they are at play, chasing each other round and round in lessening circles, darting off at all kinds of angles, crossing and recrossing May, and trying to win her sedateness into a game at romps, turning round on each other with gay defiance, pursuing the cows and the colts, leaping up as if to catch the crows in their flight;—all in their harmless and innocent—"Ah wretches! villains! rascals! four-footed mischiefs! canine plagues! Saladin! Brindle!"—They are after the sheep—"Saladin, I say!"—They have actually singled out that pretty spotted lamb—"Brutes, if I catch you! Saladin, Brindle!"

We shall be taken up for sheep-stealing presently ourselves. They have chased the poor little lamb into a ditch, and are mounting guard over it, standing at bay —“ Ah wretches, I have you now ! for shame, Saladin ! Get away, Brindle ! See how good May is. Off with you, brutes ! For shame ! For shame !” and brandishing a handkerchief, which could hardly be an efficient instrument of correction, I succeeded in driving away the two puppies, who after all meant nothing more than play, although it was somewhat rough, and rather too much in the style of the old fable of the boys and the frogs. May is gone after them, perhaps to scold them ; for she has been as grave as a judge during the whole proceeding, keeping ostentatiously close to me, and taking no part whatever in the mischief.

The poor little pretty lamb ! here it lies on the bank quite motionless, frightened I believe to death, for certainly those villains never touched it. It does not stir. Does it breathe ? Oh yes, it does ! It is alive, safe enough. Look, it opens its eyes, and, finding the coast clear and its enemies far away, it springs up in a moment and gallops to its dam, who has stood bleating the whole time at a most respectful distance. Who would suspect a lamb of so much simple cunning ? I really thought the pretty thing was dead—and now how glad the ewe is to recover her curling spotted little one ! How fluttered they look ! Well ! this adventure

has flurried me too : between fright and running, I warrant you, my heart beats as fast as the lamb's.

Ah ! here is the shameless villain Saladin, the cause of the commotion, thrusting his slender nose into my hand to beg pardon and make up ! “ Oh wickedest of soldans ! Most iniquitous pagan ! Soul of a Turk ! ” —but there is no resisting the good-humoured creature's penitence. I must pat him. “ There ! there ! Now we will go to the copse, I am sure we shall find no worse malefactors than ourselves—shall we, May ?—and the sooner we get out of sight of the sheep the better ; for Brindle seems meditating another attack. *Allons, messieurs*, over this gate, across this meadow, and here is the copse.”

How boldly that superb ash-tree with its fine silver bark rises from the bank, and what a fine entrance it makes with the holly beside it, which also deserves to be called a tree ! But here we are in the copse. Ah ! only one half of the underwood was cut last year, and the other is at its full growth ; hazel, briar, woodbine, bramble, forming one impenetrable thicket, and almost uniting with the lower branches of the elms, and oaks, and beeches, which rise at regular distances over-head. No foot can penetrate that dense and thorny entanglement ; but there is a walk all round by the side of the wide sloping bank, walk and bank and copse carpeted with primroses, whose fresh and balmy odour impregnates



the very air. Oh how exquisitely beautiful ! and it is not the primroses only, those gems of flowers, but the natural mosaic of which they form a part :—that network of ground ivy, with its lilac blossoms and the subdued tint of its purplish leaves, those rich mosses, those enameled wild hyacinths, those spotted arums, and above all those wreaths of ivy linking all the flowers together with chains of leaves more beautiful than blossoms, whose white veins seem swelling amidst the deep green or splendid brown ;—it is the whole earth that is so beautiful. Never surely were primroses so richly set, and never did primroses better deserve such a setting. There they are of their own lovely yellow, the hue to which they have given a name, the exact tint of the butterfly that overhangs them (the first I have seen this year ! can spring really be coming at last ?)—sprinkled here and there with tufts of a reddish purple, and others of the purest white, as some accident of soil affects that strange and inscrutable operation of nature, the colouring of flowers. Oh how fragrant they are, and how pleasant it is to sit in this sheltered copse, listening to the fine creaking of the wind amongst the branches, the most unearthly of sounds, with this gay tapestry under our feet, and the wood-pigeons flitting from tree to tree, and mixing their deep note of love with the elemental music.

Yes ! spring is coming. Wood-pigeons, butterflies,

and sweet flowers, all give token of the sweetest of the seasons. Spring is coming. The hazel stalks are swelling and putting forth their pale tassels; the satin palms, with their honeyed odours, are out on the willow, and the last lingering winter berries are dropping from the hawthorn, and making way for the bright and blossomy leaves.

## THE TOUCHY LADY.

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ONE of the most unhappy persons whom it has been my fortune to encounter, is a pretty woman of thirty, or thereabout, healthy, wealthy, and of good repute, with a fine house, a fine family, and an excellent husband. A solitary calamity renders all these blessings of no avail :—the gentlewoman is touchy. This affliction has given a colour to her whole life. Her biography has a certain martial dignity, like the history of a nation ; she dates from battle to battle, and passes her days in an interminable civil war.

The first person who, long before she could speak, had the misfortune to offend the young lady, was her nurse ; then in quick succession four nursery maids, who were turned away, poor things ! because Miss Anne could not abide them ; then her brother Harry, by being born, and diminishing her importance ; then three governesses ; then two writing-masters ; then one music-mistress ; then a whole school. On leaving school,

affronts multiplied of course ; and she has been in a constant miff with servants, tradespeople, relations and friends ever since ; so that although really pretty (at least she would be so if it were not for a standing frown and a certain watchful defying look in her eyes), decidedly clever and accomplished, and particularly charitable, as far as giving money goes, (your ill-tempered woman has often that redeeming grace,) she is known only by her one absorbing quality of touchiness, and is dreaded and hated accordingly by every one who has the honour of her acquaintance.

Paying her a visit is one of the most formidable things that can be imagined, one of the trials which in a small way demand the greatest resolution. It is so difficult to find what to say. You must make up your mind to the affair as you do when going into a shower bath. Differing from her is obviously pulling the string ; and agreeing with her too often or too pointedly is nearly as bad : she then suspects you of suspecting her infirmity, of which she has herself a glimmering consciousness, and treats you with a sharp touch of it accordingly. But what is there that she will not suspect ? Admire the colours of a new carpet, and she thinks you are looking at some invisible hole ; praise the pattern of a morning cap, and she accuses you of thinking it too gay. She has an ingenuity of perverseness which brings all subjects nearly to a level. The mention of her neighbours

is evidently *taboo*, since it is at least twenty to one but she is in a state of affront with nine-tenths of them ; her own family are also *taboo* for the same reason. Books are particularly unsafe. She stands vibrating on the pinnacle where two fears meet, ready to be suspected of blue-stockinging on the one hand, or of ignorance and frivolity on the other, just as the work you may chance to name happens to be recondite or popular ; nay sometimes the same production shall excite both feelings. " Have you read Hajji Baba," said I to her one day last winter, " Hajji Baba the Persian"—" Really, Ma'am, I am no orientalist."—" Hajji Baba the clever Persian tale ?" continued I, determined not to be daunted. " I believe, Miss M," rejoined she, " that you think I have nothing better to do than to read novels." And so she snip-snaps to the end of the visit. Even the Scotch novels, which she does own to reading, are no resource in her desperate case. There we are shipwrecked on the rocks of taste. A difference there is fatal. She takes to those delicious books as personal property, and spreads over them the prickly shield of her protection in the same spirit with which she appropriates her husband and her children ; is huffy if you prefer Guy Mannering to the Antiquary, and quite jealous if you presume to praise Jeanie Deans ; thus cutting off his Majesty's lieges from the most approved topic of discussion among civilized people, a neutral ground as

open and various as the weather, and far more delightful. But what did I say? The very weather is with her no prudent word. She pretends to skill in that science of guesses commonly called weather-wisdom, and a fog, or a shower, or a thunder-storm, or the blessed sun himself, may have been rash enough to contradict her bodements, and put her out of humour for the day.

Her own name has all her life long been a fertile source of misery to this unfortunate lady. Her maiden name was Smythe, Anne Smythe. Now Smythe, although perfectly genteel and unexceptionable to look at, a pattern appellation on paper, was in speaking, no way distinguished from the thousands of common Smiths who cumber the world. She never heard that "word of fear," especially when introduced to a new acquaintance, without looking as if she longed to spell it. Anne was bad enough; people had housemaids of that name, as if to make a confusion; and her grandmother insisted on omitting the final *e*, in which important vowel was seated all it could boast of elegance or dignity; and once a brother of fifteen, the identical brother Harry, an Etonian, a pickle, one of that order of clever boys who seem born for the torment of their female relatives, "foredoomed their *sister's* soul to cross," actually went so far as to call her Nancy! She did not box his ears, although how near her tingling fingers' ends approached to that consummation it is not

my business to tell. Having suffered so much from the perplexity of her equivocal maiden name, she thought herself most lucky in pitching on the thoroughly well-looking and well-sounding appellation of Morley for the rest of her life. Mrs. Morley—nothing could be better. For once there was a word that did not affront her. The first alloy to this satisfaction was her perceiving on the bridal cards, Mr. and Mrs. B. Morley, and hearing that close to their future residence lived a rich bachelor uncle, till whose death that fearful diminution of her consequence, the Mrs. B. must be endured. Mrs. B. ! The brow began to wrinkle—but it was the night before the wedding, the uncle had made some compensation for the crime of being born thirty years before his nephew in the shape of a superb set of emeralds, and by a fortunate mistake, she had taken it into her head that B. in the present case, stood for Basil, so that the loss of dignity being compensated by an encrease of elegance, she bore the shock pretty well. It was not till the next morning during the ceremony, that the full extent of her misery burst upon her, and she found that B. stood not for Basil, but for Benjamin. Then the veil fell off; then the full horror of her situation, the affront of being a Mrs. Benjamin, stared her full in the face; and certainly but for the accident of her being struck dumb by indignation, she never would have married a man so ignobly christened. Her fate has been even worse than

then appeared probable; for her husband, an exceedingly popular and convivial person, was known all over his own county by the familiar diminutive of his ill-omened appellation; so that she found herself not merely a Mrs. Benjamin, but a Mrs. Ben., the wife of a Ben Morley, junior, esq. (for the peccant uncle was also godfather and namesake) the future mother of a Ben Morley the third.—Oh, the Miss Smith, the Ann, even the Nancy, shrank into nothing when compared with that short word.

Neither is she altogether free from misfortunes on her side of the house. There is a terrible *mésalliance* in her own family. Her favourite aunt, the widow of an officer with five portionless children, became one fair morning the wife of a rich mercer in Cheapside, thus at a stroke gaining comfort and losing caste. The manner in which this affected poor Mrs. Ben Morley is inconceivable. She talked of the unhappy connection, as aunts are wont to talk when nieces get paired at Gretna Green, wrote a formal renunciation of the culprit, and has considered herself insulted ever since if any one mentions a silk gown in her presence. Another affliction, brought on her by her own family, is the production of a farce by her brother Harry (born for her plague) at Covent Garden Theatre. The farce was damned, as the author (a clever young Templar) declares most deservedly. He bore the catastrophe with great heroism; and celebrated its down-



fal by venting sundry good puns and drinking an extra bottle of claret ; leaving to Anne, sister Anne, the pleasant employment of fuming over his discomfiture—a task which she performed *con amore*. Actors, manager, audience and author, seventeen newspapers and three magazines, had the misfortune to displease her on this occasion ;—in short, the whole town. Theatres and newspapers, critics and the drama, have been banished from her conversation ever since. She would as lieve talk of a silk-mercet.

Next after her visitors, her correspondents are to be pitied ; they had need look to their P's and Q's, their spelling and their stationery. If you write a note to her, be sure that the paper is the best double post, hot-pressed and gilt edged ; that your pen is in good order ; that your " dear Madams" have a proper mixture of regard and respect ; and that your foldings and sealings are unexceptionable. She is of a sort to faint at the absence of an envelope, and to die of a wafer. Note, above all, that your address be perfect ; that your *to* be not forgotten ; that the offending *Benjamin* be omitted ; and that the style and title of her mansion, SHAWFORD MANOR HOUSE, be set forth in full glory. And when this is achieved, make up your mind to her taking some inexplicable affront after all. Thrice fortunate would he be who could put twenty words together without affronting her. Besides, she is great at a scornful reply,

and shall keep up a quarrelling correspondence with any lady in Great Britain. Her letters are like challenges ; and, but for the protection of the petticoat, she would have fought fifty duels, and have been either killed or quieted long ago.

If her husband had been of her temper, she would have brought him into twenty scrapes, but he is as unlike her as possible ; a good-humoured rattling creature with a perpetual festivity of temper and a propensity to motion and laughter, and all sorts of merry mischief, like a schoolboy in the holidays, which felicitous personage he resembles bodily in his round ruddy handsome face, his dancing black eyes, curling hair, and light active figure, the youngest man that ever saw forty. His pursuits have the same happy juvenility. In the summer he fishes and plays cricket ; in the winter he hunts and courses ; and what with grouse and partridges, pheasants and woodcocks, wood-pigeons and flappers, he contrives pretty tolerably to shoot all the year round. Moreover, he attends. revels, races, assizes, and quarter-sessions ; drives stage coaches, patronises plays, is steward to concerts, goes to every dance within forty miles, and talks of standing for the county ; so that he has no time to quarrel with his wife or for her, and affronts her twenty times an hour simply by giving her her own way.

To the popularity of this universal favourite, for the restless sociability of his temper is invaluable in a dull

country neighbourhood, his wife certainly owes the toleration which bids fair to render her incorrigible. She is fast approaching to the melancholy condition of a privileged person, one put out of the pale of civilized society. People have left off being angry with her, and begin to shrug up their shoulders and say it is her way, a species of placability which only provokes her the more. For my part, I have too great a desire to obtain her good opinion to think of treating her in so shabby a manner; and as it is morally certain that we shall never be friends whilst we visit, I intend to try the effect of non-intercourse, and to break with her outright. If she reads this article, which is very likely, for she is addicted to new publications, and thinks herself injured if a book be put into her hands with the leaves cut,—if she reads only half a page she will inevitably have done with me for ever. If not, there can hardly be any lack of a sufficient quarrel in her company; and then, when we have ceased to speak or to curtsy, and fairly sent each other to Coventry, there can be no reason why we should not be on as civil terms as if the one lived at Calcutta, and the other at New York.'

## JACK HATCH.

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I PIQUE myself on knowing by sight, and by name, almost every man and boy in our parish, from eight years old to eighty—I cannot say quite so much for the women. They—the elder of them at least,—are more within doors, more hidden. One does not meet them in the fields and highways; their duties are close housekeepers, and live under cover. The girls, to be sure, are often enough in sight, “true creatures of the element” basking in the sun, racing in the wind, rolling in the dust, dabbling in the water,—hardier, dirtier, noisier, more sturdy defiers of heat, and cold, and wet, than boys themselves. One sees them quite often enough to know them; but then the little elves alter so much at every step of their approach to womanhood, that recognition becomes difficult, if not impossible. It is not merely growing, boys grow;—it is positive, perplexing and perpetual change: a butterfly hath not undergone more transmogrifications in its progress through this life, than a village belle in her arrival at the age of seventeen.

The first appearance of the little lass is something

after the manner of a caterpillar, crawling and creeping upon the grass, set down to roll by some tired little nurse of an elder sister, or mother with her hands full. There it lies—a fat, boneless, rosy piece of health, aspiring to the accomplishments of walking and talking; stretching its chubby limbs; scrambling and sprawling; laughing and roaring; there it sits, in all the dignity of the baby, adorned in a pink-checked frock, a blue spotted pinafore, and a little white cap, tolerably clean, and quite whole. One is forced to ask if it be boy or girl; for these hardy country rogues are all alike, open eyed, and weather-stained, and nothing fearing. There is no more mark of sex in the countenance than in the dress.

In the next stage, dirt-encrusted enough to pass for the chrysalis, if it were not so very unquiet, the gender remains equally uncertain. It is a fine, stout, curly-pated creature of three or four, playing and rolling about, amongst grass or mud all day long; shouting, jumping, screeching—the happiest compound of noise and idleness, rags and rebellion, that ever trod the earth.

Then comes a sun-burnt gipsy of six, beginning to grow tall and thin, and to find the cares of the world gathering about her; with a pitcher in one hand, a mop in the other, an old straw bonnet of ambiguous shape, half hiding her tangled hair; a tattered stuff petticoat, once green, hanging below an equally tattered cotton frock, once purple; her longing eyes fixed on a game

of baseball at the corner of the green, till she reaches the cottage door, flings down the mop and pitcher, and darts off to her companions, quite regardless of the storm of scolding with which the mother follows her run-away steps.

So the world wags till ten ; then the little damsel gets admission to the charity school and trips mincingly thither every morning, dressed in the old-fashioned blue gown, and white cap, and tippet, and bib and apron of that primitive institution, looking as demure as a Nun, and as tidy ; her thoughts fixed on button-holes, and spelling-books—those ensigns of promotion ; despising dirt and baseball, and all their joys.

Then at twelve, the little lass comes home again, uncapped, untippeted, unschooled ; brown as a berry, wild as a colt, busy as a bee—working in the fields, digging in the garden, frying rashers, boiling potatoes, shelling beans, darning stockings, nursing children, feeding pigs ; —all these employments varied by occasional fits of romping and flirting, and idle play, according as the nascent coquetry, or the lurking love of sport, happens to preponderate ; merry, and pretty, and good with all her little faults. It would be well if a country girl could stand at thirteen. Then she is charming. But the clock will move forward, and at fourteen she gets a service in a neighbouring town ; and her next appearance is in the perfection of the butterfly state, fluttering, glit-

tering, inconstant, vain,—the gayest and gaudiest insect that ever skimmed over a village green. And this is the true progress of a rustic beauty, the average lot of our country girls; so they spring up, flourish, change and disappear. Some indeed marry and fix amongst us, and then ensues another set of changes, rather more gradual perhaps, but quite as sure, till gray hairs, wrinkles, and lindsey-woolsey, wind up the picture.

All this is beside the purpose. If woman be a mutable creature, man is not. The wearers of smock frocks, in spite of the sameness of the uniform, are almost as easily distinguished by an interested eye, as a flock of sheep by the shepherd, or a pack of hounds by the huntsman; or to come to less affronting similes, the members of the House of Commons by the Speaker, or the gentlemen of the bar by the Lord Chief Justice. There is very little change in them from early boyhood. “The child is father to the man” in more senses than one. There is a constancy about them; they keep the same faces however ugly; the same habits however strange; the same fashions however unfashionable; they are in nothing new fangled. Tom Coper, for instance, man and boy, is and has been addicted to posies,—from the first polyanthus to the last china rose, he has always a nosegay in his button hole; George Simmons may be known a mile off, by an eternal red waistcoat; Jem Tanner, summer and winter, by the smartest of all smart

straw hats ; and Joel Brent, from the day that he left off petticoats, has always, in every dress and every situation looked like a study for a painter—no mistaking him. Yes ! I know every man and boy of note in the parish, with one exception—one most signal exception, which “ haunts, and startles and waylays ” me at every turn. I do not know, and I begin to fear that I never shall know Jack Hatch.

The first time I had occasion to hear of this worthy was on a most melancholy occurrence. We have lost—I do not like to talk about it, but I cannot tell my story without—We have lost a cricket match, been beaten, and soundly too, by the men of Beech-hill, a neighbouring parish. How this accident happened, I cannot very well tell ; the melancholy fact is sufficient. The men of Beech-hill, famous players, in whose families cricket is an hereditary accomplishment, challenged and beat us. After our defeat, we began to comfort ourselves by endeavouring to discover how this misfortune could possibly have befallen. Every one that has ever had a cold, must have experienced the great consolation that is derived from puzzling out the particular act of imprudence from which it sprang, and we on the same principle, found our affliction somewhat mitigated by the endeavour to trace it to its source. One laid the catastrophe to the wind—a very common scape goat in the catarrhal calamity—which had, as it were, played



us booty, carrying our adversary's balls right and ours wrong; another laid it to a certain catch missed by Tom Willis, by which means Farmer Thackum, the pride and glory of the Beech-hillers, had two innings; a third to the aforesaid Thackum's remarkable manner of bowling, which is circular, so to say, that is, after taking aim, he makes a sort of *chassée* on one side, before he delivers his ball, which pantomimic motion had a great effect on the nerves of our eleven, unused to such quadrilling; a fourth imputed our defeat to the over civility of our umpire, George Gosseltine, a sleek, smooth, silky, soft-spoken person, who stood with his little wand under his arm, smiling through all our disasters—the very image of peace and good humour; whilst their umpire, Bob Cox, a roystering, roaring, bullying blade, bounced, and hector, and blustered from his wicket, with the voice of a twelve-pounder; the fifth assented to this opinion, with some extension, asserting that the universal impudence of their side took advantage of the meekness and modesty of ours, (N. B. it never occurred to our modesty, that they might be the best players) which flattering persuasion appeared likely to prevail, in fault of a better, when all on a sudden, the true reason of our defeat seemed to burst at once from half a dozen voices, re-echoed like a chorus by all the others—"It was entirely owing to the want of Jack Hatch! How could we think of playing without Jack Hatch?"

This was the first I heard of him. My enquiries as to this great player were received with utter astonishment. "Who is Jack Hatch?" "Not know Jack Hatch!" There was no end to the wonder.—"Not to know him; argued myself unknown." "Jack Hatch—the best cricketer in the parish, in the county, in the country! Jack Hatch who had got seven notches at one hit! Jack Hatch, who had trolled, and caught out a whole eleven! Jack Hatch, who besides these marvellous gifts in cricket, was the best bowler and the best musician in the hundred,—could dance a hornpipe and a minuet, sing a whole song-book, bark like a dog, mew like a cat, crow like a cock, and go through Punch from beginning to end! Not know Jack Hatch!"

Half ashamed of my non-acquaintance with this admirable Crichton of rural accomplishments, I determined to find him out as soon as as possible, and I have been looking for him more or less, ever since.

The cricket-ground and the bowling green were of course, the first places of search; but he was always just gone, or not come, or he was there yesterday, or he is expected to-morrow—a to-morrow, which as far as I am concerned never arrives;—the stars were against me. Then I directed my attention to his other acquirements; and once followed a ballad-singer half a mile who turned out to be a strapping woman in a man's great coat; and another time pierced a whole

mob of urchins to get at a capital Punch—when behold it was the genuine man of puppets, the true squeakery, the “real Simón Pure,” and Jack was as much to seek as ever.

At last I thought that I had actually caught him, and on his own peculiar field, the cricket-ground. We abound in rustic fun, and good humour, and of course in nick-names. A certain senior of fifty, or thereabout, for instance, of very juvenile habits and inclinations, who plays at ball, and marbles, and cricket, with all the boys in the parish, and joins a kind merry buoyant heart to an aspect somewhat rough and care-worn, has no other appellation that ever I heard but “Uncle;” I don’t think, if by any strange chance he were called by it, that he would know his own name. On the other hand, a little stunted pragmatistical urchin, son and heir of Dick Jones, an absolute old man cut shorter, so slow, and stiff, and sturdy, and wordy, passes universally by the title of “Grandfather”—I have not the least notion that he would answer to Dick. Also a slim, grim-looking, white-headed lad, whose hair is bleached, and his skin browned by the sun, ’till he is as hideous as an Indian idol, goes, good lack! by the pastoral misnomer of the “Gentle Shepherd.” Oh manes of Allan Ramsay! the Gentle Shepherd!

Another youth, regular at cricket, but never seen except then, of unknown parish, and parentage, and

singular uncouthness of person, dress, and demeanour, rough as a badger, ragged as a colt, and sour as verjuice, was known, far more appropriately, by the cognomen of "Oddity." Him, in my secret soul, I pitched on for Jack Hatch. In the first place, as I had in the one case a man without a name, and in the other a name without a man, to have found these component parts of individuality meet in the same person, to have made the man fit the name, and the name fit the man, would have been as pretty a way of solving two enigmas at once, as hath been heard of since *Œdipus* his day. But besides the obvious convenience and suitability of this belief, I had divers other corroborating reasons. Oddity was young, so was Jack ;—Oddity came up the hill from leaward, so must Jack ;—Oddity was a capital cricketer, so was Jack ;—Oddity did not play in our unlucky Beech-hill match, neither did Jack ;—and, last of all, Oddity's name was Jack, a fact I was fortunate enough to ascertain from a pretty damsel who walked up with him to the ground one evening, and who on seeing him bowl out Tom Coper, could not help exclaiming in soliloquy, as she stood a few yards behind us, looking on with all her heart, " Well done, Jack !" That moment built up all my hopes ; the next knocked them down. I thought I had clutched him, but willing to make assurance doubly sure, I turned to my pretty neighbour, (Jack Hatch too had a sweet-

heart) and said in a tone half affirmative, half interrogatory, "That young man who plays so well is Jack Hatch?"—"No, ma'am, Jack Bolton!" and Jack Hatch remained still a sound, a name, a mockery.

Well! at last I ceased to look for him, and might possibly have forgotten my curiosity, had not every week produced some circumstance to relumine that active female passion.

I seemed beset by his name, and his presence invisibly as it were. Will of the wisp is nothing to him; Puck, in that famous *Midsummer Dream*, was a quiet goblin compared to Jack Hatch. He haunts one in dark places. The fiddler, whose merry tones come ringing across the orchard in a winter's night from Farmer White's barn, setting the whole village a dancing, is Jack Hatch. The whistler, who trudges homeward at dusk up Kibe's lanes, out-piping the nightingale, in her own month of May, is Jack Hatch. And the indefatigable learner of the bassoon, whose drone, all last harvest, might be heard in the twilight, issuing from the sexton's dwelling on the Little Lea, "making night hideous," that iniquitous practiser is Jack Hatch.

The name meets me in all manner of ways. I have seen it in the newspaper for a prize of pinks; and on the back of a warrant on the charge of poaching;—N. B. the constable had my luck, and could not find

the culprit, otherwise I might have had some chance of seeing him on that occasion. Things the most remote and discrepant issue in Jack Hatch. He caught Dame Wheeler's squirrel; the magpie at the Rose owes to him the half dozen phrases with which he astounds and delights the passers by; the very dog Tero,—an animal of singular habits, who sojourns occasionally at half the houses in the village, making each his home till he is affronted—Tero himself, best and ugliest of finders—a mongrel compounded of terrier, cur, and spaniel—Tero, most remarkable of ugly dogs, inasmuch as he constantly squints, and commonly goes on three legs, holding up first one, and then the other, out of a sort of quadrupedal economy to ease those useful members—Tero himself is said to belong of right and origin to Jack Hatch.

Every where that name meets me. 'Twas but a few weeks ago that I heard him asked in church, and a day or two afterwards I saw the tail of the wedding procession, the little lame clerk handing the bridemaid, and a girl from the Rose running after them with pipes, passing by our house. Nay, this very morning, some one was speaking—Dead! what dead? Jack Hatch dead?—a name, a shadow, a Jack o' lantern! Can Jack Hatch die? Hath he the property of mortality? Can the bell toll for him? Yes! there is the coffin and

the pall—all that I shall ever see of him is there!—  
There are his comrades following in decent sorrow—  
and the poor pretty bride, leaning on the little clerk—  
My search is over—Jack Hatch is dead!

## EARLY RECOLLECTIONS.

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### MY SCHOOL-FELLOWS.

“ Five pupils were my stint, the other  
I took to compliment his mother.”

#### PLEADER'S GUIDE.

ALL the world knows what a limited number of pupils means ; our stint was twenty ; and really, considering the temptations of great girls, very great girls, too old to learn, as parlour-boarders ; and little girls, very little girls, too young to learn, as pets, we kept to it vastly well. We were not often more than thirty ; principally because the house would not, with a proper regard to health and accommodation—points never forgotten by our excellently-intentioned governess—conveniently contain a greater number. If the next house could have been procured, we should soon have increased to fifty ; and, indeed, might have gone on gradually multiplying till we had travelled half round the square : for Mrs. S.



had always a difficulty in saying no—that ugliest of monosyllables—and the task was not rendered easier when she was beset by the mingled temptations of interest, flattery, and affection. It was best as it was; we were quite enough, even though, early in my abode, a lucky accident incident to the state ridded us of those anomalous personages, the parlour-boarders.

An old pupil having arrived at the presentation age, seventeen, and her guardians not knowing exactly what to do with her, she was continued in H. P. upon that footing. I shall never forget the difference that one day made in this fair damsel. Translated on a sudden from the school-room to the drawing-room! preferred at once over the heads of her fellows! I never saw such a change. Perhaps a *parvenu* of the French Revolution might be something like it, or a boy officer in his first regimentals, or a knight of the last edition, or an author the night of a successful play, or a court beauty in her birth-day plumes, or any other shuttlecock pate, giddy with happiness and vanity. She was no worse, poor thing, than most girls of seventeen or eighteen; that transition state when learning is laid aside and knowledge not come; she was ostentatiously idle always, and affrontingly gracious, or astoundingly impertinent by fits and starts—patronised one day and forgot the next. No M. P. freshly elected for an independent borough ever experienced a more sudden loss of memory. There was no-

thing remarkable in this; but unluckily nature never intended our poor *parvenue* for a lady of consequence. She was born to be a child all her days; and, which was much worse, to look like one;—the most insignificant little fair-haired girl that ever lived. Dress did nothing for her: her very milliner gave her up in despair. Gowns turned into frocks when tied round her slim straight waist;—caps, turbans, feathers, muffs, all artificial means of giving age, and size, and importance, failed in this unfortunate case. Never did a faded beauty take so much pains to look like a girl as she did to look like a woman. I believe that she would have consented to be dressed like her grandmother, if it would have made her seem as old. But all was in vain; time only could cure her obstinate youthfulness of form and expression, and time travelled rather slower with the idle girl than he had been used to do with the busy one; so that, after a few days' display of her gay plumage, she wearied of her airs and her finery, and withdrew as much as possible from her old companions, to partake of the larger society and more varied amusements amongst which she began to be introduced. Three months after, she re-appeared in the school-room quite a different creature, absent, pensive, languishing, silly beyond her usual silliness, and in great want of a sympathising friend. She soon found one of course; every “Tilburina, mad in white satin,” may make sure of a “confidante mad in

white dimity." She soon found a friend, a tall, sleepy-eyed girl, as simple as herself—and then the closetings, the note-writings, the whisperings, the mystery, the importance! The whole school was on tiptoe to find out the secret, and the confidante was in great danger of telling, when, luckily for her reputation, the secret told itself. One fine night, when the moon shone brightly, the fair Tilburina set off for Gretna Green. After this we had no more parlour-boarders.

But although we had no more parlour-boarders, we were fertile in great girls,—young ladies sent from the country for "improvement," as the milliners say, who, after a seven years' apprenticeship in some provincial fashion-shop, come up to the capital to be finished: (alas! they generally found that they had to begin)—or the desperately naughty and the hopelessly dull, banished from home to be out of the way, and to try what school would do;—or the luckless daughters of the newly wealthy, on whom the magic air of a London seminary was expected to work as sudden a transformation as the wand of Cinderella's fairy godmother. They were the most to be pitied. How often, during the fiery ordeal of the first half-year, they must have wished themselves poor again! The most interesting of these unfortunate rich people were three sisters from Orkney, the youngest past sixteen, whose mother had unexpectedly succeeded to the large inheritance of an Indian cousin. They were

gentlewomen born and bred, these Minnas and Brendas of the Shetland islands, though as wild and unformed and as much used to liberty as their country ponies. Unaccomplished they were of course, but they could never have been thought ignorant any where but in a London school. The mistake lay in sending them there, amongst a tribe of little pedants with all the scaffolding of learning about them. The eldest bore the transition pretty well. She had had health too delicate to enjoy in all its licence her natural freedom; and had lived two or three years with an aunt in Edinburgh, so that she was become in a manner reconciled to civilization; besides she had a natural taste for elegance and refinement, and gave her whole attention and free will to the difficult task of beginning at twenty to conquer the rudiments of French and Italian, and music and drawing. The second sister weathered the storm almost equally well, though in a different manner. She was so overflowing with health and spirits, so fearless and uncaring, so good-humouredly open in confessing her deficiencies, and so wisely regardless of lectures and exhortations, that she won her way through the turmoil of lessons and masters, without losing an atom of her hardihood and buoyancy. To be sure she learned nothing; but there was no great harm in that. Her younger sister was not so fortunate—Oh, that charming sister Anne! They were all fine tall young women, but Anne was something more.

I never saw any thing so lovely as her bright blooming complexion, her glittering blue eyes, and her light agile form, when, in some cold windy morning that reminded her of Orkney, she would bound across the garden, with her hat in her hand, and her brown curling hair about her shoulders, forgetting in the momentary enjoyment, where she was and all around her. That blessed oblivion could not last long; and then came the unconquerable misery of shame and fear and shyness, a physical want of liberty and fresh air, and a passionate and hopeless longing for her early home. She pined and withered away like a wild bird in a cage, or a hardy mountain plant in a hot-house; and, without any definite complaint, was literally dying under the united influence of confinement and smoke and the French grammar. They carried her into the country, first to Richmond, then to Windsor Forest; but trees and quiet waters had no power over her associations. They talked of a journey to Italy,—that was worse still; she loathed the “sweet breath of the south.” At last they were wiser; they took her home: and the sweet Anne, restored to her old habits and her own dear island, recovered. Nothing else could have saved her.

A complete contrast to these fair Zetlanders might be found in another triad of sisters, old settlers in H. P.,—short, dark, lively girls, who knew the school as men are said sometimes to know the town, and knew nothing

else ; were clever there and there only. Their father, a widower and a man of business, sent them from home mere infants, and, providing kindly and carefully for their improvement and comfort, seldom sought to be pleased or troubled with their company. This was no hardship to these stirring spirits, who loved the busy stage on which they played such capital parts, foremost every where, especially in mischief, first to be praised and last to be found out. They were as nearly alike in age and stature, as three sisters born at three different times well could be,—any two of them might have passed for twins ; and having in common a certain readiness of apprehension, a quickness of memory, and an extraordinary pliability of temper, as well as the brown complexion, the trim small figure and quick black eye, they usually passed for fac-similes of one another in mind and person. There were differences, however, in both. Catharine, the eldest, was by far the most perfect specimen of school craft. She was a manœuvrer such as it did one good to see ; got places and prizes nobody knew how ; escaped by a miracle from all scrapes ; was a favourite at once with the French teacher and the English ; was idle, yet cited for industry ; naughty, yet held up as a pattern of good conduct ; thoroughly selfish, and yet not disliked. She was, in short, a perfect stateswoman ; wound the whole school round her finger ; and wanted nothing of art but the art to conceal it.

Even that point she might have compassed, had not her features and voice stood in her way,—a lurking slyness in her smile and her eye, and a sort of *falsetto* tone in her speech. But she did no harm, and meant none. She drove straight to her objects, but she took care not to upset the passers by. Charlotte, the next sister, was not content with this negative merit; she had all the address of her elder-born, and made a more generous use of it; got praise and prizes for herself, and pardons and holidays for all the world. Hers was a real popularity—nobody could help loving Charlotte. She was like Catharine too; but it was such a pretty likeness, with her laughing gipsy face and her irresistible power of amusing. She was a most successful and daring mimic, made no scruple of taking people off to their faces, and would march out of the room after Mrs. S. or poor Madame with the most perfect and ludicrous imitation of the slow measured step of the one and the mincing trip of the other, the very moment after she had coaxed them out of some favour. Nevertheless, we all loved Charlotte; besides her delightful good humour, she used her influence so kindly, and was sure to take the weaker side. We all loved Charlotte. Jane, *la cadette*, more resembled Catharine, only her ambition was of a lower flight. She was a cautious diplomatist, and aimed less at success, than at safety, had a small quiet party amongst the younger fry, was the pet of the

housemaids, and won her way by little attentions,—by mending gloves, making pincushions, drawing patterns, and running on errands, in which last accomplishment she had an alertness so surprising, that Madame used to say she dazzled her eyes. In spite of her obligingness, nobody thought of loving Miss Jane ; but she got on astonishingly well without it, and managed her wisers and betters by falling in with their ways.

All our sisters were not so much alike. One pair was strikingly different. The eldest, the favourite of a very silly mother, was a beauty, poor child, and subject to all the discipline which growing beauties are fated to endure. Oh the lacing, the bracing, the bonneting, the veiling, the gloving, the staying within for fear of sun or wind or frost or fog ! Her mama would fain have had her wear a mask to preserve her complexion, and so much dreaded the sweet touch of the air, that her poor victim seldom got out of doors, and had little other exercise than dancing and the dumb bells. I am sure she would have given “ all the worlds that people ever have to give,” to be plain. Morally speaking, perhaps, it was well for her that beauty should come in the shape of so disagreeable a consciousness ; it effectually preserved her from vanity. She was a most genuine, kind-hearted, natural girl, thoroughly free from conceit or pretension of any kind. Her sister Julia had enough for both. Miss Julia was the pet of a father, who was, though in a



different line, quite as silly as his wife ; and having a tolerable memory, a plodding spirit of application, and an unbounded appetite for applause, was in training for a learned lady, a blue stocking in embryo. What an insufferable little pedant it was, with its studies and its masters, more in number than the instructors of the *bourgeois gentilhomme*, its dictionaries of arts and sciences, and its languages without end ! Words ! words ! words ! nothing but words ! One idea would have put her out. It was a pity, too, for she was a good-natured and well-meaning person, only so grave and dull and formal. However precious her learning might have been, she would have bought it dearly, for it cost her her youthfulness,—at thirteen she was old. Neither did this incessant diligence tell as one might have expected with her masters ; they praised her of course, and held her up as an example to the clever and the idle ; but I don't think they would have been much charmed to have had many such pupils. Certainly she was the least in the world of a goose ; always troublesome in asking stupid questions, and more troublesome still in not understanding the answers. Once, indeed, she made a grand display of science and erudition. Mr. Walker came to give us a course of lectures, and Miss Julia pulled out a little square red book, and made notes—notes in a sort of hieroglyphic, which she was pleased to call short-hand ; incomprehensible notes—notes that may sometimes have

been paralleled since at the Royal Institution, but which nobody had ever dreamed of in our school. Oh ! the glory of those pot-hooks and hangers ! As if purposely to enhance her reputation, one of her class-fellows, who was in a careless idle way something of a rival to Miss Julia, happened to be an egregious coward, hated guns and gunpowder, squibs and crackers, and all those iniquitous shocks and noises which are at once sudden and expected. She had sitten out, with grief and pain, by help of ducking her head, shutting her eyes, and putting her fingers in her ears, two or three popgun lectures on chemistry and mechanics ; but when the electricity came, she could bear it no longer ; she fairly ran away, escaped unperceived in the *melée*, and ensconced herself under her own bed, where she might have remained undetected till doomsday, had not the unforeseen vigour of a cleanly housemaid, fresh from the country, fairly unearthed her, actually swept her out. Think, what a contrast ! What a triumph ! Courage, and short-hand notes of lectures, on the one side ; cowardice, ignorance, and running away, on the other ! Miss Julia was never so tall in her life. The *éclat* of the little square book even consoled her, when, in the week after this adventure, a prize, for which she had been trying all the half-year, was wrested from her by the runaway.

Besides the usual complement of languid East Indians, and ardent Creoles, we had our full share of foreigners.

Of one charming Italian girl, much older than myself, I remember little but the sweet sighing voice, the graceful motions, and the fine air of the head. I always think of her when I look at the Cartoons :—Raphael must have studied from such women. She left school shortly after my arrival there, and was succeeded by an exquisitely pretty Anglo-Portuguese, whom, from her name, her aversion to roast-pig—strange antipathy !—and her regularly spending Saturday at home, we suspected (for it was not avowed) to be a Jewess. Be that as it may, she was the most splendid piece of natural colouring that I ever beheld.—An ivory complexion, with cheeks and lips like damask roses, black laughing eyes with long silky lashes, and rich clusters of black curls parting on her white brow. She was beauty itself. She soon went away too ; and then came the daughter of a crack-brained Austrian Baron, straight from Vienna. There was nothing remarkable in her face or person, except the tender expression of her large blue eyes : yet she was peculiar from her foreign dress and manner, and her ignorance of all languages save her native German, and so much Italian as might help her through the most ordinary wants and duties of the day. Above all, she was interesting from her gentleness, her melancholy, and her early and disastrous fate. She died suddenly during the summer holidays. How many young hearts grieved for her, even amid the joys of home ; and how

we missed her sweet patient looks, her few words—all words of kindness, it seemed as if she could learn no other—when we returned! We were not wise to grieve; her short life had been a life of sorrow, and the grave was her best resting-place. It is not wise—but still, after a lapse of twenty years, it saddens me to think of her death. And there is another, and a far dearer school-fellow, a foreigner, too, of whom I think almost as sadly; for we are parted by such distance, that even now as I write I know not if she be alive or dead. I speak of the young countess C., sent from Russia for the advantage of an English education, begun under a private governess, and concluded with us. She is difficult to describe—perhaps because she was so simple and so grand. She resembled the Greek drama in her pure and harmonious beauty; and the gentle dignity of her manner sustained the impression. Every body admired her, though only one dared to love her; and the repaying that love by the most constant and cordial affection, allowed not much intercourse beyond a general kindness and good-will with the rest of our little world. In truth, she had no time for intimacies; she had a hunger and thirst for knowledge, such as I have never seen equalled; knowledge of all sorts and degrees, from the most trifling womanly occupations—making gum-seals, imitating cameos, working frills, up to the severest manly studies, mathematics, and the classics. I never saw any one so

universally accomplished. Music, though she played well on many instruments, was perhaps the least striking of her acquirements ; drawing and languages the most so. Her English especially was enchanting ; you could just distinguish her from a native by an originality, a raciness, a floating grace, like that which pervades the letters of Mrs. Klopstock. Oh ! what a charming creature she was ! How thoroughly free from vanity and self-conceit ! her industry was astonishing : she used to apologise for it sometimes, as I sate at her side doing nothing. “ Really,” she would say, “ she could not help it ! ”—as if her diligence had been a fault, and my idleness a virtue. The dear, dear Sophia ! parting from her was my first sorrow.

Last on our roll of foreigners, came two French girls ; one of them merely a fair specimen of her pleasant nation—sprightly, good-humoured, amusing, and plain : the other a person of some note in this chronicle, being—and it is saying much—beyond all manner of competition, the greatest dunce in the school. Zenobie de M—— had lost both her parents in the Revolution, and was under the care of an aunt, splendidly married, and living in London, in the very first world. She was a fine, striking, fashionable-looking girl, in the French style of beauty ; rather large-boned, angular and high-shouldered ; but so light, erect, and agile, that the very defects of her figure seemed graces. Her face, though

that too told her country, was pretty, in spite of a wide mouth and a cocked-up nose ; pretty from its sparkling expression—all smiles, and blushes, and animation : so were her manners. We had not a more agreeable and intelligent girl in the house ; how she could contrive to be a dunce I cannot imagine—but a dunce she was, in the most comprehensive sense of that ill-omened word. She could not spell two syllables in any language, could scarcely write her name, could not cast up three figures, could not construe the simplest sentence, could not read the notes in music, never could, and never did, learn the catechism. This seems incredible on recollection, and it seemed more so at the moment. Nothing but a school could have brought the fact fully out : and even with the proofs hourly before our eyes, we could not help thinking sometimes that we must have done her injustice. Her ingenuity in evading the pains and penalties of duncicalness was very great. She had a dexterous way of excusing any error in speech, by pleading her English education for a French fault, or her French birth for a mistake in English ; so that she claimed to speak both languages with the allowance of a foreigner. She spoke them, as she played the piano, entirely by ear, with great elegance, but incorrectly. In all sports, or light accomplishments, she was unrivalled. Skipping-ropes, and battledores, and tambourines, and castanets, in her graceful hands, were her own delight, and the delight

of all beholders. But the triumph of triumphs for Zenobie was dancing-day ; to see her, and her countryman the dancing-master—he teaching, and she executing, such pirouettes and entrechats as none but French heels could achieve—both looking down with a very visible contempt on “ English awkwardness with two left legs.” Those Mondays and Wednesdays must pretty well have compensated for the mortifications of the rest of the week ; and she needed some compensation : for, with all the splendour of her home, and the elegance of her appearance, it was evident that she was neglected. The mother’s heart and the mother’s eye were wanting ; you might tell that she was an orphan. She abounded in trinkets and knick-knacks, and fashionable frippery ; but no comforts, no indulgences, no garden-bonnet, no warm pelisse, no cakes or fruit, no shillings or half-crowns, no consideration for her gentlewomanly spirit ! I never shall forget the generous pleasure with which she shared half a dozen oranges—the rare present of some titled friend—between those, who from happier circumstances, had been enabled to be kind to her. Oh ! she was very desolate, very forlorn ! How often, when we were going home for the holidays, with smiling mothers and fathers, so impatient that they would scarcely allow time for an adieu, I have seen her black eyes full of tears, as she anticipated the hours, or days, or weeks that she must wait till an insolent waiting-

maid should have leisure or will to remember her. Poor Zenobie! she left us suddenly, to return to Paris with her aunt. The last time I heard of her, she was a celebrated beauty at the court of Napoleon. I don't know what has become of her since the change of dynasty, but I hope she is about the court still—it is just what she is fit for; she was made for feathers and long trains, and smiling, and graciousness, and dancing, and small talk; she ought to be at court; a court life would so become her; and she would become it like a diamond necklace polished and glittering and precious alike from the fashion and the material. I hope she is still at court.

We are now fairly at the end of our foreign list. There are two or three more British worthies for whom we must find a niche in another place, along with our English teacher and our authorised play.



## WALKS IN THE COUNTRY.

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### THE WOOD.

APRIL 20th.—Spring is actually come now, with the fullness and almost the suddenness of a northern summer. To-day is completely April ;—clouds and sunshine, wind and showers ; blossoms on the trees, grass in the fields, swallows by the ponds, snakes in the hedge-rows, nightingales in the thickets, and cuckoos every where. My young friend Ellen G. is going with me this evening to gather wood-sorrel. She never saw that most elegant plant, and is so delicate an artist that the introduction will be a mutual benefit ; Ellen will gain a subject worthy of her pencil, and the pretty weed will live ;—no small favour to a flower almost as transitory as the gum cistus ; duration is the only charm which it wants, and that Ellen will give it. The weather is, to be sure, a little threatening, but we are not people to mind the weather when we have an object in view ; we shall

certainly go in quest of the wood-sorrel, and will take May, provided we can escape May's followers; for, since the adventure of the lamb, Saladin has had an affair with a gander, furious in defence of his goslings, in which rencontre the gander came off conqueror; and as geese abound in the wood to which we are going (called by the country people the Pinge), and the victory may not always incline to the right side, I should be very sorry to lead the Soldan to fight his battles over again. We will take nobody but May.

So saying, we proceeded on our way through winding lanes, between hedgerows tenderly green, till we reached the hatch-gate, with the white cottagè beside it embosomed in fruit trees, which forms the entrance to the Pinge, and in a moment the whole scene was before our eyes.

"Is not this beautiful, Ellen?" The answer could hardly be other than a glowing rapid "Yes!"—A wood is generally a pretty place; but this wood—Imagine a smaller forest, full of glades and sheep-walks, surrounded by irregular cottages with their blooming orchards, a clear stream winding about the brakes, and a road intersecting it and giving life and light to the picture; and you will have a faint idea of the Pinge. Every step was opening a new point of view, a fresh combination of glade and path and thicket. The accessories too were changing every moment. Ducks, geese, pigs, and children, giving

way, as we advanced into the wood, to sheep and forest ponies; and they again disappearing as we became more entangled in its mazes, till we heard nothing but the song of the nightingale, and saw only the silent flowers.

What a piece of fairy land! The tall elms over head just bursting into tender vivid leaf, with here and there a hoary oak or a silver-barked beech, every twig swelling with the brown buds, and yet not quite stripped of the tawny foliage of Autumn; tall hollies and hawthorns beneath, with their crisp brilliant leaves mixed with the white blossoms of the sloe, and woven together with garlands of woodbines and wild-briars;—what a fairy land!

Primroses, cowslips, pansies, and the regular open-eyed white blossom of the wood anemone (or to use the more elegant Hampshire name, the windflower) were set under our feet as thick as daisies in a meadow; but the pretty weed that we came to seek was coyer; and Ellen began to fear that we had mistaken the place or the season.—At last she had herself the pleasure of finding it under a brake of holly—“ Oh look! look! I am sure that this is the wood-sorrel! Look at the pendent white flower, shaped like a snow-drop and veined with purple streaks, and the beautiful trefoil leaves folded like a heart,—some, the young ones, so vividly yet tenderly green that the foliage of the elm and the hawthorn

would show dully at their side,—others of a deeper tint and lined, as it were, with a rich and changeful purple!—Don't you see them?" pursued my dear young friend, who is a delightful piece of life and sunshine, and was half inclined to scold me for the calmness with which, amused by her enthusiasm, I stood listening to her ardent exclamations—"Don't you see them? Oh how beautiful! and in what quantity! what profusion! See how the dark shade of the holly sets off the light and delicate colouring of the flower!—And see that other bed of them springing from the rich moss in the roots of that old beech tree! Pray let us gather some. Here are baskets." So quickly and carefully we began gathering, leaves, blossoms, roots and all, for the plant is so fragile that it will not brook separation;—quickly and carefully we gathered, encountering divers petty misfortunes in spite of all our care, now caught by the veil in a holly bush, now hitching our shawls in a bramble, still gathering on, in spite of scratched fingers, till we had nearly filled our baskets and began to talk of our departure:—

"But where is May? May! May! No going home without her. May! Here she comes galloping, the beauty!"—(Ellen is almost as fond of May as I am.)—

"What has she got in her mouth? that rough, round, brown substance which she touches so tenderly? What can it be? A bird's nest? Naughty May!"

"No! as I live, a hedgehog! Look, Ellen, how it

has coiled itself into a thorny ball! Off with it May! Don't bring it to me!"——And May, somewhat reluctant to part with her prickly prize, however troublesome of carriage, whose change of shape seemed to me to have puzzled her sagacity more than any event I ever witnessed, for in general she has perfectly the air of understanding all that is going forward——May at last dropt the hedgehog; continuing however to pat it with her delicate cat-like paw, cautiously and daintily applied, and caught back suddenly and rapidly after every touch, as if her poor captive had been a red-hot coal. Finding that these pats entirely failed in solving the riddle, (for the hedgehog shammed dead, like the lamb the other day, and appeared entirely motionless), she gave him so spirited a nudge with her pretty black nose, that she not only turned him over, but sent him rolling some little way along the turfy path,—an operation which that sagacious quadruped endured with the most perfect passiveness, the most admirable non-resistance. No wonder that May's discernment was at fault, I myself, if I had not been aware of the trick, should have said that the ugly rough thing which she was trundling along, like a bowl or a cricket-ball, was an inanimate substance, something devoid of sensation and of will. At last my poor pet, thoroughly perplexed and tired out, fairly relinquished the contest, and came slowly away, turning back once or twice to look at the object of her curiosity, as if half

inclined to return and try the event of another shove. The sudden flight of a wood-pigeon effectually diverted her attention; and Ellen amused herself by fancying how the hedgehog was scuttling away, till our notice was also attracted by a very different object.

We had nearly threaded the wood, and were approaching an open grove of magnificent oaks on the other side, when sounds other than of nightingales burst on our ear, the deep and frequent strokes of the woodman's axe, and emerging from the Pinge we discovered the havoc which that axe had committed. Above twenty of the finest trees lay stretched on the velvet turf. There they lay in every shape and form of devastation: some, bare trunks stripped ready for the timber carriage, with the bark built up in long piles at the side; some with the spoilers busy about them, stripping, hacking, hewing; others with their noble branches, their brown and fragrant shoots all fresh as if they were alive—majestic corses, the slain of to-day! The grove was like a field of battle. The young lads who were stripping the bark, the very children who were picking up the chips, seemed awed and silent, as if conscious that death was around them. The nightingales sang faintly and interruptedly—a few low frightened notes like a requiem.

Ah! here we are at the very scene of murder, the very tree that they are felling; they have just hewn round

the trunk with those slaughtering axes, and are about to saw it asunder. After all it is a fine and thrilling operation, as the work of death usually is. Into how grand an attitude was that young man thrown as he gave the final strokes round the root; and how wonderful is the effect of that supple and apparently powerless saw, bending like a riband, and yet overmastering that giant of the woods, conquering and overthrowing that thing of life! Now it has passed half through the trunk, and the woodman has begun to calculate which way the tree will fall; he drives a wedge to direct its course;—now a few more movements of the noiseless saw; and then a larger wedge. See how the branches tremble! Hark how the trunk begins to crack! Another stroke of the huge hammer on the wedge, and the tree quivers, as with a mortal agony, shakes, reels, and falls. How slow and solemn and awful it is! How like to death, to human death in its grandest form! Cæsar in the Capitol, Seneca in the bath, could not fall more sublimely than that oak.

Even the Heavens seem to sympathize with the devastation. The clouds have gathered into one thick low canopy, dark and vapoury as the smoke which overhangs London; the setting sun just gleaming underneath with a dim and bloody glare, and the crimson rays spreading upward with a lurid and portentous grandeur, a subdued and dusky glow, like the light reflected

on the sky from some vast conflagration. The deep flush fades away, and the rain begins to descend ; and we hurry homeward rapidly yet sadly, forgetful alike of the flowers, the hedgehog, and the wetting, thinking and talking only of the fallen tree.



## THE VICAR'S MAID.

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ABOUT three years ago, our neighbouring village, the little hamlet of Aberleigh, received one of the greatest blessings which can befall a country parish, in the shape of an active, pious, and benevolent Vicar. Chaucer shall describe him for me, for I prefer the real words of the old poet, to the more elaborate and ornamented version of Dryden :

“ A good man ther was of religioun,  
That was a poure parson of a toun ;  
But riche he was of holy thought, and werk ;  
He was also a lerned man, a clerk,  
That Cristes gospel trewely wolde preche ;  
His parishens devoutly wolde he teche ;  
Benigne he was and wonder diligent  
And in adversite ful patient ;  
And swiche he was yproved often sithes  
Ful loth were him to cursen for his tithes,  
But rather wolde he geven out of doute  
Unto his poure parishens aboute

Of his offering, and eke of his substance ;  
 He coude in litel thing have suffisance.  
 Wide was his parish, and houses fer asonder,  
 But he ne left nought for no rain ne thonder  
 In sikeness and in mischief to visite  
 The feuest in his parish moche and lite,  
 Upon his fete, and in his hand a staf:  
 This noble ensample to his shepe he yaf,  
 That first he wrought and afterward he taught ;  
 Out of the gospel he the wordes caught.—  
 And though he holy were, and vertuous  
 He was to sinful men not dispitous,  
 Ne of his speche dangerous ne digne,  
 But in his teching discrete and benigne.  
 To drawen folk to heven with fairnesse,  
 By good ensample was his besinesse ;  
 But if were any persone obstinat,  
 What so he were of highe or low estat,  
 Him wolde he snibben sharply for the nones,  
 A better preest I trowe that no wher non is,  
 He waited after no pompe ne reverence,  
 Ne maked him no spiced conscience ;  
 But Cristes lore and his apostles twelve  
 He taught, but first he folwed it himselve."

*Prologue to the CANTERBURY TALES.*

Such was Mr. Mansfield. And he brought to Aber-  
 leigh a still greater blessing than the Roman Catholic  
 Priest of Chaucer could do, (although, by the way, the  
 old bard was a follower of Wickliffe, the herald of the

Reformation) in a wife, as good as himself; two lively promising girls; and a rosy, frank-hearted boy, quite worthy of such parents. One shall seldom see together a finer family, for our "gode parson" was not only "lite of foot," a man in the prime of life, full of vigour and activity, but united the intellectual countenance of the scholar, to the elegance and polish of a gentleman. Mrs. Mansfield was remarkably pretty; and the young people had about them all the glow and the brightness of their fresh and happy age. But the beauty of the vicarage, the beauty of the parish, was a female servant who accompanied them, their maid Mary. She was five or six and twenty, and looked as much; of middle height, and middle size, rather inclining to the fulness and luxuriance of womanhood; fair, blooming, smiling, and bright-eyed, yet with an expression so chastised, so perfected by modesty, that no one could look on her without being sure that she was as good as she was lovely. Her voice, and dress, and manner too, were all in keeping with her sweet face, gentle, quiet, and retiring. In short she had not been a week in the village, before all the neighbours were asking each other—"Have you seen the vicar's pretty maid?"

The home which received this delightful family was every way worthy of its inhabitants. A country parsonage is generally in itself and its associations a happy mixture of the unpretending and the comfortable; and

of all parsonages Aberleigh is the most beautiful. It stands amidst a labyrinth of green lanes, running through a hilly and richly-wooded country, whose valleys are threaded by the silver Loddon. On one side is the magnificent wreck of a grand, but deserted mansion-house, built with porch and pinnacle, and rich gothic windows in the style of Elizabeth's day; on the other, the old village church; its tower fancifully ornamented with brick-work, and the church-yard planted with broad flowering limes, and funereal yew-trees; leading up to the church, a short avenue of magnificent oaks; and behind the avenue, and divided from the lane by a considerable space, partly lawn, partly court, and partly flower-garden, stands the vicarage.

The house is a low irregular building, covered to the very roof with creeping shrubs, roses, woodbine, jessamine, clematis and myrtles flowering into the very chamber windows,—such myrtles as were never before seen in this part of England. One of them died in the hard winter, twelve years ago, and a chair and a stool were made of the wood. It took no polish, but still it had a pretty look and a pretty name; that English myrtle, it almost sounded like a contradiction. The garden is just suited to the house; large squares of fine turf with beds and borders of flowers divided by low box hedges, so thick and broad and level, that you might walk on them two abreast; with a long piece of water, in one

compartment, stocked with gold and silver fish ; a tall yew hedge, fencing off the kitchen garden, and a sundial rising from the green turf opposite the house,—that voiceless monitor, whose silence is so eloquent, and whose gliding finger realizes, and perhaps suggested the sublime personification of Wordsworth—"Time the Shadow."

The Mansfields were exceedingly struck with their new habitation. They had hitherto resided on the coast of Sussex, the South Downs ; so that accustomed to those green hills, and the fertile, but unsheltered plains beyond them, the absolute nakedness of the land, and the vast and bare expanse of the ocean, they were almost as much unaccustomed to trees as a negro to snow, and first wondered at, then complained of, and at last admired our richly-wooded valleys, and the remains of old chases, and bits of wild forest scenery in which we abound. The artlessness with which these feelings were confessed, added a fresh charm to this interesting family. There is always something very attractive in the ignorance of any particular subject which we sometimes meet with amongst clever and cultivated people. Their questions are so intelligent, so poignant, so, (to use a bold phrase) full of answers. They instruct our knowledge, and make us feel far more sensibly that which we teach. It was the pleasantest thing in the world, to walk through Aberleigh Wood with Clara Mansfield, and Evelyn's Sylva, showing her, by the help of that delightful book,

the differences of form and growth, and bark and foliage; sometimes half puzzled myself by some freak of nature, or oftener forgetting our avowed object in admiration of the pictorial beauty, the varied colouring, the play of light and shadow, and the magical perspective of that delightful spot.

The young people caught my enthusiasm, and became almost as completely foresters, as the half-wild ponies, who owned the name, or the still wilder donkies, whom we used to meet in the recesses of the wood, and whose picturesque forms and grouping, added the interest of life, and of motion to the landscape.

All the family became denizens of Aberleigh wood, except Mary, who continued a perfect Nereide, constant to the coast to a degree that rendered her quite unjust to our inland scenery. She languished under the reverse disease of a Calenture, pined for the water, and was literally, and in a new sense of the word, sea-sick. To solace her malady, she would sometimes walk across the park to the Loddon, especially at sun-set; for to hear Mary, any one would have thought that that bright luminary never did make a set worth talking of, except when he could look at himself in a watery mirror; and then, when she reached the Loddon, provoked at the insufficiency of the spectacle, she would turn back without vouchsafing a second glance, although it is but justice to that poetical river to declare, that at Aberleigh bridge

it is as broad, as glassy, and as beautiful a stream, as ever the sun showed his face in, with much of the character of a lake ; but Ullswater, or Winandermere would have fared equally ill with Mary ; nothing but the salt sea could content her.

It was soon obvious that our inland beaux were no better suited to her taste, than our inland scenery. Half the young men in the village offered her suit and service. First, George Ellis the farrier, a comely youth, and well to do in the world, who kept an apprentice, and a journeyman, a horse and cart, two greyhounds, three spaniels, and one pointer, being indeed by many degrees the keenest sportsman in these parts ;—George Ellis proffered to make her mistress of himself, his household, his equipage, and his stud ; but was civilly rejected. The next candidate who presented himself was Ben Appleton the son of a neighbouring farmer ; Ben Appleton is a wag, and has a face and figure proper to the vocation ; a shape, tall, stout, and square, that looks stiff, and is active ; with a prodigious power of putting himself into all manner of out-of-the-way attitudes, and of varying and sustaining this pantomime to an extent that really seems inexhaustible. The manner in which he can, so to say, transpose that sturdy form of his, put his legs where his arms should be, and his arms in the place of his legs, walk on his hands, stand on his head, tumble, hop, and roll, might raise some envy in

Grimaldi himself. His features are under the same command. Originally I suspect him to have been good-looking ; but who can ever say that he has seen Ben Appleton's real face ? He has such a roll of the eye, such a twist of the nose, such a power of drawing to either ear that broad mouth, filled with strong white teeth. His very talk is more like a piece of a laugh, than the speech of an ordinary man ; and his actions have all the same tendency—full of fun, with a dash of mischief. But Ben is a privileged person, an universal favourite ; and Mary, never dreaming of such a catastrophe as his falling in love, used to contemplate his tricks from afar, with something the same amusement, which she might have felt in watching a kitten, or a monkey. For a long time he made his addresses with impunity ; unsuspected, and unrepelled ; no one believed him in earnest. At last, however, Ben and his case became serious, and then Mary became serious too ; he received a firm though gentle dismissal, and looked grave for a whole week. Next came Aaron Keep the shoemaker, the wisest man in the parish, noted all over the country for his knowledge of the stars, and judgment in the weather, and almost as notorious for his aversion to matrimony and his contempt for women. Aaron was said to have been jilted in his youth, which soured a kindly temper and put mistrust into his heart. Him, even him, did Mary's beauty, and Mary's modesty van-



quish. He who had been abusing the sex for the last forty years, actually made her an offer. I suppose the happiest moment of his life must have been that in which she refused him. One can fancy him trembling over the narrowness of his escape, like the man who did not fall over Dover Cliff—but the offer was made.

The cause of all this obduracy at last appeared. A young sailor arrived at the vicarage, whom the most graphical of our poets shall assist me in describing ;

“ Fresh were his features, his attire was new ;  
Clean was his linen, and his jacket blue ;  
Of finest jean his trowsers, tight and trim,  
Brushed the large buckle at the silver rim.”

CRABBE.

He arrived at the vicarage towards the end of winter, and was introduced by Mary to mine hostess of the Eight Bells as her half-brother ; although Mary was so little used to telling fibs, that her blushes, and downcast looks and smiles between, in short, the whole pervading consciousness would have betrayed her, as Mrs. Jones, the landlady, observed, to any one who had but half an eye ; to say nothing of Miss Clara's arch look as she passed them. Never was half-brother so welcomed ; and in good truth, he was well worthy of his welcome.

Thomas Clere was an exceedingly fine young man, of six or seven and twenty, with a head of curly black hair, a sun-burnt complexion, a merry, open coun-

tenance, and a bluff hearty voice that always sounded as if transmitted through a speaking-trumpet. He established himself at the Eight Bells, and soon became very popular in that respectable hostelry. Besides his good humour, his liberality, and his sea jokes, next to Irish jokes always the most delightful to rustic ears, perhaps because next to Irish, the least intelligible—your country bumpkin loves a conundrum, and laughs heartiest at what he does not understand;—besides these professional qualifications, Thomas was eminently obliging and tolerably handy; offered his assistance in every emergency, and did more good, and less harm than most amateur helpers, who, generally speaking, are the greatest hinderances under the sun. Thomas was really useful. To be sure, when engaged in aiding *Mary*, a few casualties did occur from pre-occupation; once, for instance, they contrived to let down a whole line of clothes which he had been assisting to hang out. Neither party could imagine how the accident happened, but the washing was forced to be done over again. Another time, they, between them, overset the milk-bucket, and the very same day so over-heated the oven, that a whole batch of bread, and three apple-pies were scorched to a cinder. But Thomas was more fortunate with other coadjutors. He planted a whole patch of cabbages in a manner perfectly satisfactory, and even made a very decent cucumber-bed in mine host's gar-

den. He churned Mrs. Jones's butter as well as Mary herself could have done it. He shaped bats, and cut wickets for the great boys, plaited wicker baskets for the younger ones, and even dug a grave for the sextoness, an old woman of eighty, the widow of a former sexton who held that office (corruptly, as our village radicals were wont to say) in conjunction with that of the pew-opener, and used to keep the children in order by one nod of her gray head, and to compound for the vicar every Sunday a nosegay of the choicest flowers of the season. Thomas, although not very fond of the job, dug a grave, to save six-pence for poor Alice. Afterwards this kindness was thought ominous.

No wonder that our seaman was popular. The only time he got into a scrape at Aberleigh, was with two itinerant showmen, who called themselves sailors, but who were, Thomas was sure, "nothing but land lubbers," and who were driving about an unhappy porpoise in a wheelbarrow, and showing it at two-pence a head, under the name of a sea pig. Thomas had compassion on the creature of his own element, who was kept half alive by constant watering, and threatened to fight both the fellows unless they promised to drive it instantly back to the sea; which promise was made, and broken, as he might have expected, if a breach of promise could ever enter into a sailor's conception. Our sailor was too frank even to maintain his Mary's maidenly artifice, and had

so many confidants, that before Mr. Mansfield published the banns of marriage between Thomas Clere and Mary Howell, all the parish knew that they were lovers.

At last the wedding-day came. Aaron Keep left his work to take a peep at the bride, and Ben Appleton paid her the high compliment of playing no trick either on her or the bridegroom. How beautiful she looked in her neat and delicate dress, her blushes and her smiles ! The young ladies of the vicarage, with whose family she had lived from childhood, went to church with her, and every body cried as usual on such occasions. Clara, who had never been at a wedding before, had resolved against crying ; but tears are contagious things, and poor Clara's flowed, she did not well know why. This too was afterwards thought an ill omen.

Thomas and Mary had hired a room for a week in a neighbouring town, after which she was to return for a while to her good master and mistress ; and he was to go to sea again in the good merchant ship, the Fair Star. To go to sea again for one last voyage, and then to return rich, quite rich for their simple wishes, (Thomas's savings already yielded an income of twelve shillings a week) set up in some little trade, and live together all the rest of their lives—such were their humble plans. They found their short honeymoon, passed in a strange place, and in idleness, a little long ! fancy, in spite of true love, as greater people have done

before them. Yet Mary would willingly have remained, even under the sad penalty of want of occupation, rather than part with Thomas for the sea, which now first began to appear formidable in her eyes. But Thomas had promised, and must go on this one last voyage to Canada; he should be home in six months, six months would be soon gone, and then they would never part again. And so he soothed, and comforted, and finally brought her back to the vicarage, and left her there; and she, when the trial came, behaved as well as possible. Her eyes were red, to be sure, for a week or two, and she would turn pale when praying for "those who travel by land or by water," but still she was calm, and cheerful, and apparently happy.

An accident about six weeks after their separation, first disturbed her tranquillity. She contrived in cutting a stick to tie up a tree carnation belonging to her dear Miss Clara, to lacerate very considerably the third finger of her left hand. The injury was so serious, that the surgeon insisted on the necessity of sawing off the ring, the wedding-ring! She refused. The hurt grew worse and worse. Still Mary continued obstinate, in spite of Mrs. Mansfield's urgent remonstrances; at length it came to the point of sawing off the ring or the finger, and then, and not till then, not till Mr. Mansfield had called to aid all the authority of a master, did she submit—evidently with more reluctance, and

more pain than she would have felt at an amputation. The finger got well, and her kind Mistress gave her her own mother's wedding-ring to supply the place of the severed one,—but it would not do;—a superstitious feeling had seized her, a strange vague remorse; she spoke of her compliance as sinful; as if by divesting herself of the symbol, she had broken the marriage tie. Our good vicar reasoned with her, and Clara laughed, and she listened mildly and sweetly, but without effect. Her spirits were gone; and a fear, partly superstitious partly perhaps inevitable, when those whom we love are absent, and in danger, had now seized Mary Clere.

The summer was wet and cold, and unusually windy, and the pleasant rustling of that summer breeze amongst the lime-trees, the very tapping of the myrtles against the casement, as they waved in the evening air, would send a shiver through her whole frame. She strove against this feeling, but it mastered her. I met her one evening at the bridge, (for she had now learned to love our gentle river) and spoke to her of the water lilies, which, in their pure and sculptural beauty, almost covered the stream. "Yes Ma'am," said poor Mary, "but they are melancholy flowers for all their prettiness; they look like the carved marble roses over the great tomb in the chancel, as if they were set there for monuments for the poor creatures that perish by the waters"—and then

with a heavy sigh she turned away, happily for me, for there was no answering the look and the tone.

So, in alternations, of "fear and trembling hope," passed the summer; her piety, her sweetness, and her activity continued unabated, perhaps even increased; and so in truth was her beauty; but it had changed its character. She was thinner, paler, and far, far sadder. So in augmented fear passed the autumn. At the end of August he was to have returned; but August was gone,—and no news of him. September crept slowly away, and still no word of Thomas. Mary's dread now amounted to agony. At length, about the middle of October, a letter arrived for Mr. Mansfield. Mary's eye caught the post-mark, it was that of the port from whence her husband sailed. She sank down in the little hall, not fainting, but unable to speak or move, and had only strength to hold out the letter to Clara, who ran to her on hearing her fall. It was instantly opened, and a cry of inexpressible horror announced the news. The good ship *Fair Star* was missing. She had parted company from several other vessels on her homeward voyage, and never been heard of since. All hope was over, and the owner of the *Fair Star*, from whom the letter came, enclosed a draft for the wages due to the deceased. Poor Mary! she did not hear that fatal word. The fatal sense had smitten her long before, as with a sword. She was carried to

bed in a state of merciful suspension of suffering, and passed the night in the heavy and troubled sleep that so often follows a stunning blow. The next morning she awoke.—Who is so happy as not to know that dreadful first-waking under the pressure of a great sorrow?—the vague and dizzying sense of misery we know not why? the bewildering confusion of memory? the gradual recollection? and then the full and perfect woe that rushes in such a flood over the heart? who is so happy as not to have known this bitterness?—Poor Mary felt it sorely, suffocatingly: but she had every support that could be offered. Mr. Mansfield read to her, and prayed with her. His excellent family soothed her and wept with her. And for two days she seemed submissive and resigned. On the third, she begged to see the fatal letter, and it acted with the shock of electricity. “Missing! only missing!”—He was alive—she was sure he was alive—And this idea possessed her mind, till hope became to her a worse poison than her old torturer, fear. She refused to put on the mourning provided for her, refused to remain in the tranquillity of her own apartment; and went about talking of life and happiness, with the very look of death. A hundred times a day she read that letter, and tried to smile, and tried to believe that Thomas still lived. To speak of him as dead, seemed to her raised feelings, like murder. She tried to foster the faint spark of hope, tried to de-



ceive herself, tried to prevail on others ; but all in vain. Her mind was evidently yielding under this tremendous struggle ; this perpetual, and never-ceasing combat against one mighty fear. The sense of her powerless suspense weighed her heart down. When I first saw her, it seemed as if twenty years of anguish and sickness had passed over her head in those ten days ; she was shrunken, and bent, and withered, like a plant plucked up by the roots. Her soft pleasant voice was become low, and hoarse, and muttering ; her sweet face haggard and ghastly ; and yet she said she was well, tried to be cheerful, tried to smile—oh, I shall never forget that smile !

These false spirits soon fled ; but the mind was too unsettled, too infirm for resignation. She wandered about, night and day ; now weeping over the broken wedding-ring ; now haunting the church-yard, sitting on the grave, *his* grave. Now hanging over the brimming and vapoury Loddon, pale as the monumental lilies, and seeming to demand from the waters her lost husband. She would stand there in the cold moonlight, till suddenly tears or prayer would relieve the vexed spirit, and slowly and shiveringly the poor creature would win home. She could still pray, and that was comfort : but she prayed for him ; the earthly love clung to her and the earthly hope. Yet never was wifely

affection more ardent, or more pure; never sufferer more gentle than that fond woman.

It was now winter; and her sorrows were evidently drawing near their close, when one evening returning from her accustomed wandering, she saw a man by the vicarage door. It was a thick December twilight, and in the wretched and tattered object before her, sick, and bent, and squalid, like one who comes from a devouring shipwreck or a long captivity, who but Mary could have recognized Thomas Clere? Her heart knew him on the instant, and with a piercing cry of joy and thankfulness, she rushed into his arms. The cry alarmed the whole family. They hastened to share the joy and the surprise, and to relieve poor Thomas of his fainting burden. Both had sunk together on the snowy ground; and when loosened from his long embrace, the happy wife was dead!—the shock of joy had been fatal!

## MARIANNE.

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I HAVE had a very great pleasure to day, although to make my readers fully comprehend how great a one, I must go back more years than I care to think of. When a very young girl, I passed an autumn amongst my father's relatives in a northern county. The greater part of the time was spent with his favourite cousin, the lady of a rich baronet, who was on the point of setting out on an annual visiting tour, as the manner is in those hospitable regions where the bad roads, the wide distances, and the large mansions, render an occasional sojourn so much preferable to the brief and formal interchange of mere dinner-parties. Sir Charles and lady C. were highly pleased at the opportunity which this peregrination of friendship and civility afforded, to shew me a fine country, and to introduce me to a wide circle of family connexions.

Our tour was extensive and various. My cousins were acquainted, as it seemed to me, with every one of consequence in the county, and were themselves two

of the most popular persons it contained,—he from character, for never was any man more unaffectedly good and kind,—she from manner, being one of the pleasantest women that ever lived,—the most lively and good-humoured, and entertaining, and well-bred. In company, as the young relative and companion of this amiable couple, I saw the country and its inhabitants to great advantage. I was delighted with every thing, and never more enchanted than when, after journeying from house to house for upwards of a month, we arrived at the ancient and splendid baronial castle of the Earl of G.

Now I had caught from Sir Walter Scott's admirable poems, then in their height of fashion, as well as from the older collections of Percy and Ritson, with which I had been familiar almost from the cradle, a perfect enthusiasm for all that savored of feudal times, and one of the chief pleasures which I had promised myself in my northern excursion, was the probability of encountering some relics of those picturesque but unquiet days. Hitherto these expectations had been disappointed. Halls, places, houses, granges, lodges, parks, and courts out of number, we had visited; but neither in the north nor in the south had I yet been so happy as to be the inhabitant of a castle. This too was a genuine Gothic castle, towered and turretted, and battlemented, and frowning, as heart could desire; a real old castle, that

had still a moat, and had once exhibited a draw-bridge ; a castle that had certainly existed in the " old border day," and had in all probability undergone as many sieges as Branksome itself, inasmuch as it had, during its whole existence, the fortune to belong to one of the noblest and most warlike names of the " Western Wardenry." Moreover, it was kept up in great style, had spears, bows, and stags' horns in the hall, painted windows in the chapel, a whole suit of armour in the picture gallery, and a purple velvet state-bed gold-fringed, coroneted, and plumed, covered with a purple quilt to match, looking just like a pall, and made up with bolsters at each end,—a symmetry which proved so perplexing to the mayor of the next town, who with his lady happened to sleep there on some electioneering occasion, that the worthy chief magistrate and his wife fairly got in at different ends, and lay the whole night head to foot \*. I was not in the coroneted bed, to be sure ; I do not think I should much have relished lying under that pall-like counterpane and those waving feathers ; but I was in a castle grand and romantic enough even to satisfy the romance of a damsel under seventeen, and I was enchanted ; the more especially as the number of the family party promised an union of

\* This accident actually befel the then mayor of N. at Alnwick castle some years back.

the modern gaiety, which I was far from disliking, with the ancient splendour for which I sighed. But, before I had been four and twenty hours within those massive walls, I began to experience "the vanity of human wishes," to wonder what was become of my raptures, to yawn I did not know why, to repeat to myself over and over again the two lines of Scott that seemed most *à-propos* to my situation,

" And all in high baronial pride  
A life both dull and dignified ;"—

in short, to find out that stupid people will be stupid any where, even in a castle. I will give after my fashion a slight outline, a sort of pen-and-ink drawing of the party round the dining-table; and by the time they have scanned it, my readers, if they do not yawn too, will at least cease to wonder at my solecism in good-breeding.

We will begin with the earl, a veteran nearly seventy years of age, a tall lank figure with an erect military carriage, a sharp weather-beaten face, and a few gray hairs most exactly powdered and bound together in a slender *queue* behind. His talk was very like his person, long and thin; prosing most unmercifully about the American war, and telling interminable zig-zag stories which set comprehension at defiance. For the rest, he was an excellent person, kind to his family and

civil to his guests; he never failed to take wine with lady C. at dinner, and regularly every morning made me in the very same words a flourishing compliment on my rosy cheeks.

Next in order came the countess, tall and lean like her husband, and (allowing for difference of sex and complexion, his skin resembling brick-dust in colour, and hers being of the sort of paleness usually called sallow,) not unlike him in countenance. In their minds and manners there was also a similarity, yet not without some difference.—Dullness in him showed itself in dead speech, in her in dead silence. Stiff and cold as a poker was my lady. Her fixed, settled, unsmiling silence hung over the banquet like a cloud, chilling and darkening all about her. Yet they say she was warm-hearted, and (which would seem extraordinary if we did not frequently meet with instances of the same apparent contradiction) was famous for epistolary composition, dealt out words in writing with astonishing fluency and liberality, and was celebrated far and near for that most intolerable waste of paper which is commonly known by the name of a sensible letter.

Then came the goodly offspring of this noble couple, that is to say, the three youngest; for the elder branches of this illustrious house were married and settled in distant homes. The honourable Frederic G., the only son who remained in the paternal mansion, was a diplo-

matist *in embryo*, a rising young man. His company they were not likely to enjoy long, since he was understood to be in training for the secretaryship to a foreign embassy. He had recently come into parliament for a neighbouring borough, and his maiden speech (I wonder who wrote it!) had created a prodigious sensation in the family circle. On the glory of that oration, the echo of his fame, he lived then, and has lived (as far as I know) ever since. I can only say that I never heard him utter more than a monosyllable at a time during the ten days that we breakfasted, dined, and supped in company—ineffable coxcomb! and I have not heard of his speaking in the house of commons from that time to this. There he sits single-speech G. Of his elder sister, the lady Matilda, I can say little more than that she was reckoned one of the finest harp-players in England—a musical automaton, who put forth notes instead of words, and passed her days in alternate practisings for the purpose of subsequent exhibition (which fatiguing exercise was of course a continual and provoking struggle with a host of stringed difficulties), and in the exhibitions themselves, in which also to my ear the difficulties seemed to have the best of the battle. Then followed her sister, the lady Caroline, an intelligent-looking young woman, and no musician—but, alack! the fair damsel was in love, and on the very point of marriage. Her lover Lord B.



(who may as well fall into this division, since he was domesticated in the house and already considered as a son), was also pleasant-looking,—but then he was in love too. Of course this couple, although doubtless very good company for each other, went for nothing with the rest of the party, of whose presence indeed they, to do them justice, seemed generally most comfortably unconscious.

Next came the appendages to a great house, the usual official residents. First appeared Mr. M. the family chaplain, a great mathematician, whose very eyes seemed turned inward as if contemplating the figures on his brain. Never was man so absent since the one described by La Bruyère. He once came down to dinner with the wrong side of his waistcoat outward; and, though he complained of the difficulty of buttoning it, could not discover the reason; and he has been known more than once to walk about all the morning, and even to mount the pulpit, with one white leg and one black (like the discrepant eyes of my friend the Talking Gentleman), in consequence of having forgotten to draw a silk stocking over his gauze one. He seldom knew the day of the month, often read a wrong lesson, and was pretty sure to forget his sermon; otherwise a most kind and excellent creature, whom for very pity nobody could think of disturbing when he appeared immersed in calculation, which was always. Secondly came

Miss R., some time governess and present companion ; what a misnomer ! the errantest piece of still life I ever encountered, pale, freckled, red-haired, and all over small. Thirdly entered Dr. S., the family physician, a stern oracular man, with a big wig and a tremendous frown. Two red-faced gentlemen, *des vieux militaires*, who drank my lord's wine and listened to his stories, completed this amusing assembly.

There was another person who never appeared at the dining-table, but whose presence, during the two or three hours that she spent in the saloon in the morning, and about the same time which she passed in the drawing-room after dinner, distressed and annoyed me more than all the party put together. This was the honourable Mrs. G., the earl's mother, (the title had descended to him from an uncle) a lady in her ninety-second year, and sufficiently vigorous to justify the expectation that she might live to see a hundred. She was a tall, spare, tough-looking woman, with a long bony face, dim staring eyes, and an aspect altogether corpse-like and unearthly. Her dress was invariably of black silk with a very long waist, a point-lace kerchief, or rather tippet, and a very small short rounded apron of the same costly material. On her head she wore a lace cap and lappets surmounted with a sort of shepherdess hat of black silk, fastened on by two enormous pins with silver tops. This dress, which, in gay colours and on a

young and handsome woman, would have been very pretty, only served to make Mrs. G. appear more ghastly, more like a faded picture which had stepped out of its frame. She was a perpetual *memento mori*; a scull and cross-bones would hardly have been more efficacious in mortifying the vanity of youth. This, however, I could have endured: it was an evil in common; but the good lady had experienced the partial loss of faculty and memory, so frequent at her advanced age, and, having unfortunately mistaken me for her great-grandchild, the eldest daughter of Lord G.'s eldest son, she could by no means be turned aside from the notion which had so unaccountably seized her imagination, and treated me exactly as a doting, scolding great-grandmama would be likely to treat her unlucky descendant,—a process which so thoroughly disconcerted me, a shy shamefaced girl, that, after I had undergone about six hours of hugging and lecturing from my pretended ancestress, I was fain to keep my room to avoid her intolerable persecution. In this dilemma the countess suddenly proposed to turn me over to Marianne, and a young lady about my own age, whom I had not before seen, made her appearance. Oh what a difference between her and the other inhabitants of the castle! What a lovely airy creature it was!

“ A dancing shape, an image gay,  
To haunt and startle and waylay;”

light and bounding as a fawn, with a wild fanciful beauty in her bright black eyes, in the play of her features, and the brilliancy of her dark yet glowing complexion! A charming creature, in mind and in person, was Miss Marianne,—for by that name alone she was introduced to me,—almost equally charming in the high spirits whose elasticity harmonised with her animated beauty, or in the tender and pensive melancholy which so often chequered her gayer mood.

We became almost immediately intimate—happy privilege of youthful companionship!—and had speedily told each other our whole histories, as two young ladies meeting in an old castle ought to do. My story, I am sorry to say, was very little worthy of such a situation and opportunity for display. Nothing could be less romantic than the ease and comfort and indulgence in which my life had hitherto passed, nothing less adapted to a heroine than the secure and affluent middle station in which my happy lot then seemed to be fixed. My tale was told in two or three brief sentences. The history of my fair companion was not so quickly dispatched. What she knew of herself might indeed have been revealed in three words, since that amounted to nothing more than her having lived ever since she could recollect at G. Castle, sometimes in the nursery and the library, sometimes in the housekeeper's room, kindly treated by all, and taught by fits and snatches as

she came in their way; so that her education, partly conducted by the young lady's governess, partly by the young gentlemen's tutor, and sometimes even by Lady G.'s maid, bore a very strong resemblance to that ingenious exercise of female patience called patch-work, where you meet with bits of every thing and nothing complete. The two most extraordinary circumstances were her want of a surname (for she had never been called by any other appellation than Marianne) and the sedulous care with which, although living in the same house, she had been concealed from my *soi-disante* great-grandmother Mrs. G. The loss of faculty which occasioned that mistake was of recent occurrence, as the venerable lady had till within a few months been remarkable for the accuracy and clearness of her perceptions; and Marianne related fifty stories to prove the care with which her very existence was guarded from Mrs. G.'s knowledge,—the manner in which she had been crammed into closets, stowed under sofas, smuggled behind screens, or folded into window-curtains, at the first tap of the old lady's Italian heel,—and the menaces which were thrown out against the servants, if any should presume to name her in Mrs. G.'s presence. One unlucky footman had actually been discharged on the spot, for want of invention and presence of mind and fluency of lying: when questioned as to the arranger of the flowers in their vases

(an art in which she excelled), he stammered, and looked as if going to say Miss Marianne; for which piece of intended truth (an uncommon fault in a London footman!) the poor lacquey was dismissed.

Now if either of us had possessed the slightest knowledge of the world, these circumstances would hardly have failed to suggest Marianne's true origin. We should immediately have conjectured her to be the illegitimate offspring of some near connexion of the family;—in fact she was the daughter of Lord G.'s second and favourite son, long since deceased, by a beautiful Italian singer who died in childbed of poor Marianne; but this was the last conjecture that would have entered either of our silly heads.—I, indeed, not yet seventeen, and carefully brought up, had hardly heard that such things were, and Marianne, although older and less guarded from the knowledge of fashionable wickedness, had, when left to choose her own studies, read too many novels, in which the heroines emerged from similar obscurity to high rank and brilliant fortune, not to have constructed a romance on that model for her own benefit. Indeed she had two, in one of which she turned out to be a foreign princess, in the other the daughter of an English duke.

I remember being a little startled, when, after I had given all my faith to the Russian legend (for the emperor Paul was the potentate on whom she had pitched

for her papa—pretty choice!) she began to knock down her own castle in the air, for the sake of rebuilding it on an English foundation. I could readily imagine that she had one father, but could not quite comprehend what she should want with two: besides, having given up my mind to the northern romance, I did not like to be disturbed by a see-saw of conjectures, good for nothing but to put one out. I was of a constant disposition, and stuck to the princess Rusty-Fusty version of the story so pertinaciously, that I do not even know what duke she had adopted for her English father. Any one might have been proud of her; for, with all this nonsense, the offspring of an equivocal situation and a neglected education, she was a sweet and charming creature, kind and generous and grateful, with considerable quickness of talent, and a power of attaching those with whom she conversed, such as I have rarely seen equalled. I loved her dearly, and, except the formal meals which we shared with the rest of the family, spent nearly the whole of my visit with her alone, strolling through the park or the castle in the mornings, and in the evenings sitting over the fire deep in girlish talk, or turning over the books in the old library with a less girlish curiosity. Oh how sorry we were to part! I saw nobody in the whole north like Marianne.

In a few months, however, I returned into the south, and in a very few more the kind cousins, with whom I

had visited G. Castle, were removed from me by death. My other relatives in that county fell gradually off: some died; some went to reside abroad; and some were lost to me by the unintended estrangement which grows out of a long suspension of intercourse; so that my pleasant northern tour, unconnected with any previous or subsequent habits or associations, seemed an insulated point in my history, a brilliant dream called up to recollection at pleasure like some vivid poem, or some rare and gorgeous tapestry, rather than a series of real events burnt into the mind and the memory by the strange and intense power of personal feelings. Eighteen years had elapsed since I had seen or heard of Marianne. I knew indeed that the good earl and countess had died shortly after my visit, and that their aged mother must in the course of nature have passed away long ago. But of her own destiny I had heard nothing; and, being absorbed in new occupations and nearer friends, I had, I fear, ceased even to guess. The curiosity and wonder excited by her situation had long ceased (for wonder and curiosity are very young feelings), and the interest produced by her character was dormant, though not extinct. In short, the black-eyed beauty of G. Castle was fairly forgotten, till my good stars led me this morning to B. to witness, for the first and last time of my life, the ascent of a balloon.

Is there any one of my readers who has not seen this



spectacle ? If such there be, it may perhaps be necessary to say how much duller than most sights (and almost all sights unconnected with art are dull) that dangerous toy is ; how much the letting off a boy's kite excels it in glee, and vies with it in utility ; the science of balloons being, as far as I know, nearly the only discovery of this chemical and mechanical age, (when between steam-engines and diving bells, man contrives to have pretty much his own way with the elements) which has continued to stand altogether still, as cumbersome, as unmanageable, and almost as ugly, as the original machine of Montgolfier. Nevertheless, the age is also a staring age, and we poor country people who know no better are easily taken in, so that the announcement of this aeronautic expedition (for so it was called in the programme) drew at least ten thousand gazers into the good town of B., and amongst the rest my simple self.

The day was showery by fits, and we thought ourselves very fortunate in being able to secure a commodious window in a large room just overlooking the space where the balloon was filling. At first we looked at that flagging flapping bag of tri-coloured silk, made dingy by varnish, and dingier still by the pack-thread net-work which enclosed it, giving it, when nearly filled, something of the air of a Canteloupe melon. A thousand yards of silk, they said, were wasted in that unsightly thing, enough (as a calculating milliner of my acquaint-

ancc, indignant at such misapplication of finery, angrily observed) to have made a hundred dresses with trimmings and tippets. We looked at the slow-filling ball till in our weariness we thought it became emptier, and then we looked at a prettier sight,—the spectators. They consisted for the most part of country people, spread all the way down the large space to the meadows; perched on the church-tower, on the side of the F. hill, on trees, on waggons, on the church-yard wall. Nothing was visible but heads and upturned faces, and here and there a little opening made by habitual deference for horsemen and carriages, in that grand and beautiful living mass, a pleased and quiet crowd. Then we looked at the peaceful landscape beyond, the Thames winding in its green meadows under the fine range of the O\*\*\*-shire hills, shut in on one side by the church with its magnificent Gothic tower, on the other by the before-mentioned eminence crowned with trees as with a plume. Then a sudden shower put motion in the crowd; flight and scrambling and falling ensued; numerous umbrellas were expanded: and the whole scene resembled those processions which one has sometimes seen on Indian paper, and became quite oriental.

At last, however, we were tired of gazing without, and turned our attention within doors. The room was full of fluctuating company, all strange to us except the lady of the house; and the party nearest to us, our next-

window neighbours, naturally engaged us most. The party in question consisted of a gentleman and lady in the very morning of life, who, placed in an old-fashioned window-seat, were sedulously employed in guarding and caressing a beautiful little girl about three years old, who stood between them infinitely amused at the scene. They were, as our hostess informed us, a young couple of large fortune newly settled in the neighbourhood, and seemed of that happy order of beings, handsome, smiling, and elegant, to whom every occupation is graceful. Certainly nothing could be prettier or more becoming than the way in which they talked to their lovely little girl. Another lady, evidently belonging to the party, stood near them, occasionally bending to the frequent questions of the child, or making a polite reply to the animated observations of her father, but constantly declining his offered seat, and apparently taking as little interest in the scene as well might be.

This indifference to an object which was exciting the rapturous attention of some thousands of spectators kept me so comfortably in countenance, that it excited a strong desire to discover as much as I could without rudeness of a person, whose opinions on one point, seeming to accord so remarkably with my own, gave assurance, as I modestly thought, of a sensible woman.

The lady was tall and slender, and dressed with that remarkable closeness and quietness, that entire absence

of fashion or of pretension, which belong almost exclusively to governesses or the serious. A snow-white dress entirely untrimmed, a plain but nicely-fitting dove-coloured spencer, a straw cottage-bonnet, and a white veil a good deal over the face, might have suited either caste ; but there was something in that face which inclined for the governess, or rather against the devotee. It was a pale thin countenance, which had evidently seen thirty summers, with features which had lost their bloom and roundness, but still retained their delicate symmetry, lighted up by a pair of black eyes inexpressibly intelligent—saucy, merry, dancing, talking ! Oh those eyes ! Whenever a gentleman said something learnedly wrong about hydrogen or oxygen, or air-valves or gasometers, or such branches of learning, or a lady vented something sentimentally silly about sailing amongst the stars, those black eyes flashed into laughter. Of a certainty they did not belong to one of the serious, or they would have been kept in better order ; I had therefore quite decided in favour of the governess, and had begun to puzzle myself to remember in whose head beside that of the younger Mina (that most interesting of all the Spanish patriots, who was in London during the hundred days, and was afterwards most barbarously shot in Mexico), I had seen such a pair of dancing lights, when the whole truth flashed upon me at a word. “Marianne”—began the pretty mama of the

pretty child, and in a moment I too had exclaimed "Marianne!" had darted forward, and seized both her hands, and in less than a minute we were seated in the remotest corner of the room, away from the bustle and the sight, the gazers and the balloon. It was turned off, I believe,—at least I have a faint recollection of certain shouts which implied its ascent, and remember being bored by a sentimental young lady to come and look at it "sailing like an eagle along the sky." But neither Marianne nor I saw or thought of the spectacle. We were in the midst of old recollections, and old pleasures, now raining questions on each other, now recurring delightedly to our brief companionship, and smiling half ashamed and half regretfully on the sweet illusion of that happy time.

Alas for my beautiful princess of G. Castle! Here she was, no longer young, fair, or blooming, a poor nursery governess! Alas for my princess! Sixteen years of governessing, sixteen years passed in looking at the world through the back windows, might well have dimmed that brilliant beauty, and tamed that romantic imagination. But I had not conversed with her five minutes before I found that her spirit had lost none of its buoyancy, that under all her professional demureness she was still, as her black eyes promised, one of the airiest and sprightliest creatures in the world. She glanced rapidly, but with great feeling, over the kindness she had expe-

rienced from the whole family on the death of lord and lady G., and then, in a style of light and playful gaiety, indescribably graceful and attractive, proceeded to give me the history of her successive governess-ships, touching with a pencil inimitably sportive the several humours and affectations which she had encountered in her progress through the female world. "I was never," said she in conclusion, "so happily situated as I am at present. The father and mother are charming people, and my little Emma" (by this time the child had joined us, and was nestling in Marianne's lap) "is the most promising pupil I ever had in my life. In little more than four months she has learned three letters and three quarters. I should like to see her through the alphabet—but yet"—and here she broke off with a smile and a blush, and a momentary depression of her sparkling eyes, that again brought before me the youthful beauty of G. Castle, and irresistibly suggested the idea of a more suitable termination to the romance than it had originally promised. Such blushes have only one meaning. Finding that she still paused, I ventured to finish the sentence. "But yet you will leave this promising pupil?"—"Yes."—"Not, however, for a similar situation?"—"No."—"And who is the happy man?"—"A very old friend. Do you remember Mr. M., the chaplain at the castle?"—"What! the great mathematician with the scratch wig, who saw without seeing, and heard without hearing, who wore his

waistcoat the wrong way, and went to chapel with one white stocking and one black? Is he *le futur*?" Marianne laughed outright. "His son! his son! He must have been at Cambridge when you were with us, for he also is a great mathematician, although I promise you he wears his waistcoat with the right side outward, and his legs are both of one colour. We have been waiting for a college living; and now"—and again she broke off and blushed and smiled; and again that smiling blush of modesty and pleasure and love brought back for a moment the fleeting beauty of seventeen; and even in that moment the show was over, the crowd dispersed, and we parted \*.

\* Not however for another period of eighteen years. Before the summer was gone, I had the pleasure of visiting her at her pretty rectory, of seeing with my own eyes that a great mathematician may wear stockings to match, and of witnessing the quiet gaiety, the heart-felt happiness of the dear and charming Marianne.

## EARLY RECOLLECTIONS.

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### THE ENGLISH TEACHER.

Miss R., the English teacher, to whom poor Madame took so unfortunate an aversion, was one of the most charming women that I have ever known. The pretty word "graziosa," by which Napoleon loved to describe Josephine, seemed made for her. She was full of a delicate grace of mind and person. Her little elegant figure, and her fair mild face, lighted up so brilliantly by her large hazel eyes, corresponded exactly with the soft gentle manners which were so often awakened into a delightful playfulness, or an enthusiasm more charming still, by the impulse of her quick and ardent spirit. To be sure she had a slight touch of distraction about her (distraction French, not distraction English), an interesting absence of mind. She united in her own person all the sins of forgetfulness of all the young ladies ; mislaid her handkerchief, her shawl, her gloves, her work, her



music, her drawing, her scissors, her keys ; would ask for a book when she held it in her hand, and set a whole class hunting for her thimble, whilst the said thimble was quietly perched upon her finger. Oh ! with what a pitying scorn our exact and recollective Frenchwoman used to look down on such an incorrigible shatterbrain ! But she was a poetess, as Madame said, and what could you expect better !

In spite of this misfortune, she was universally liked and respected ; I, for my own part, loved Miss R. even better than Madame ; though I had some temptations to dislike her, she having, to my sorrow, undertaken the peculiar charge of my education for the last two years of my stay at school (from thirteen to fifteen), which she followed up with extraordinary rigour ; so that instead of passing half hours and whole hours, half days and whole days, at the side of any beautiful countess, in the full enjoyment of my dearly beloved idleness, I found myself, to my unspeakable discomposure, getting by rote (an operation which I always detested) sundry tedious abridgements of heraldry, botany, biography, mineralogy, mythology, and at least half a dozen “ologies” more, compiled by herself for my express edification. I gave her fair warning that I should forget all these wise things in no time, and kept my word ; but there was no escaping the previous formality of learning them. Oh ! dear me ! I groan in spirit at the very recollection. I

was even threatened with the Latin grammar. All her instructions, however, were not administered in so unpalatable a form. To fill up any nook of time which the common demands of the school and her private lessons might leave vacant, we used to read together, chiefly poetry. With her I first became acquainted with Pope's Homer, Dryden's Virgil, and the Paradise Lost. Those were moments of intense gratification; she read capitally, and was a most indulgent hearer of my remarks and exclamations;—suffered me to admire Satan, and detest Ulysses, and rail at the pious Æneas as long as I chose. After these master-poets we turned to some peculiar favourites of her own, Akenside, whom I could not understand then (neither can I now), and Young, whom I could not read. Three weary evenings did we consume over his three first nights; but the lecture was so dismal, so afflicting, and my impatience and *ennui* were so contagious, that at last we fairly gave him up. I have never opened the Night Thoughts since; the bare recollection of that attempt is enough.

Beside the readings, Miss R. compensated in another way for the pain and grief of my unwilling application: she took me often to the theatre; whether as an extra branch of education, or because she was herself in the height of a dramatic fever, it would be invidious to inquire. The effect may be easily foreseen; my enthusiasm soon equalled her own; we began to read Shak-

speare, and read nothing else. There was of course a great difference in kind between her pleasure and mine; her's was a critical, mine a childish enjoyment; she loved fine acting, and I loved the play. Perhaps I loved the written drama more than she did; for her admiration was given rather to the great actor than to the author; she thought more of John Kemble than of Shakespeare;—it was a real passion for the stage. She never saw our great school-room without longing to turn it into a theatre. Two events, which happened in my last half-year, most unexpectedly realized her wish—though the accomplishment fell far short of her expectations. Madame, poor Madame, the determined enemy of poetry and private theatricals, left us; she returned to France, and we never saw her again; and, just at the same time, a young lady arrived from the country, so different from all other country consignments, that our prejudices melted before her like snow in the sunshine.

Eliza M. was a tall, full-formed, noble-looking girl of sixteen, with an expressive open countenance, and a fine frankness of manner. Her conversation was singularly engaging and original,—fresh, ardent, eloquent, like that of a clever boy;—manly, not masculine. No one could be in her company five minutes without being convinced of her great powers and of their high cultivation. To add to our astonishment (for we had really the imperti-

nence to think most places of education within the bills of mortality, and all beyond them, mere dens of ignorance,) to crush all our prejudices at once, she was just come from a country school, where her very last act had been the representation of Comus. Here was a discovery! In the existing state of Miss R.'s fancy, she became convinced that Eliza M. owed not only her graceful carriage and her fine elocution, but all her talents and accomplishments solely to the having sustained a part in this masque; and she instantly resolved to new-model all her pupils at a stroke in the same way. She immediately communicated her resolution to Eliza and myself, and left us to consult Mrs. S. on the subject. We remained together in high expectation, turning over Milton's exquisite poem, casting the parts, spouting, admiring, and I, between whiles, a little regretting that, though the very finest thing in the world in its way, Comus was not Richard the Third. The regret was unnecessary; we were not fated to act Comus. Miss R. returned from Mrs. S. with the appointed play, the only play which that worthy governess would hear of—the only play fit to be acted by young ladies—the Search after Happiness, a pastoral drama; and the respective idolaters of Milton and Shakspeare sat down to the perusal of Mrs. Hannah More. Do any of my readers know the piece? It is a dialogue in rhyme, moral, sensible, and well-intentioned, but not very dramatic, and

not pastoral at all. The story may be shortly told. Four fashionable young ladies, sufficiently tired of themselves and of the world, go forth into the fields one fine morning to seek a venerable elderly lady, Urania by name, through whose wisdom they expect to be made immediately good and happy. They have the usual scenic good fortune of meeting with the only human being who could properly direct them, in the person of a certain young shepherdess, called Florella, a *protégée* of Urania, who leads them to her at once. She receives the distressed damsels kindly; hears their several confessions, not of sins but of propensities; for they have all, according to Pope's system, a "ruling passion;" gives them good advice and a breakfast; and the piece concludes. It had nearly come to an abrupt conclusion in our case. Critics of fifteen and sixteen are not remarkably tolerant: and Mrs. Hannah More, though a forcible prose writer, is, without offence be it spoken, no great poet! and measured with Milton—the Search after Happiness compared to *Comus*! Alas for poor Miss R. ! within a quarter of an hour after assuming the managerial throne, she shared the fate of other managers,—her two principal actors threw up their parts. This fit of disgust was, however, rather violent than lasting. Our manager soothed and scolded, and reasoned and bribed; and we, after picking this "Pastoral Drama" to pieces as thoroughly as ever children picked a daisy, began to

relent ; listened to reason, and finally promised to try ; a condescension to which we were induced, partly by the cogent argument that any play was better than none, and partly by the promise of real scenery, new dresses, and splendid decorations. The play was now generally announced ; read with prodigious applause, (it seemed that we two had exhausted the critical carping ;) and cast in proper form. Eliza accepted Urania, stipulating that the speeches should be a good deal shortened, especially in the didactic parts ; and that the worthy lady should be made considerably younger. She declared that she would not even have acted Comus, if Comus had been an old woman ; and, above all, she demanded that one expression, which particularly affronted her, “ the goodly dame,” should be transmuted into “ gentle fair,” or some such elegancy. The four seekers after happiness were next to be disposed of. Cleora, the leader and talker of the party fell to my share. This Cleora was a learned lady, a blue stocking of the very first water, and if intended by the author, as I suppose it was, for a lesson, was sadly thrown away in the present instance. God knows there was small danger of my aspiring after too much knowledge ! What a pity that Miss Julia, maker of notes, writer of short-hand, reporter of lectures, should have left school ! She would have played Cleora to the life. She should have staid on purpose, and I dare say she would have staid, if she

could have foreseen such an opportunity of exhibiting the universality of her genius. Next came "the fair Euphelia," a pretty vain coquettish character, which, in right of beauty, was consigned to our beautiful countess. What a mistake was that too ! No one could look at the pure and lofty style of her countenance without being convinced that vanity was to her an impossible fault ; proud she might be, vain she could not ; one should as soon have suspected the Apollo Belvidere. The third lady errante, "the gentle Laurinda," was much better disposed of. Never was a part more felicitously cast ! Our Laurinda was a fine, showy girl, tall, plump, inert and languishing, with a fair blooming complexion, light sleepy eyes, long flaxen hair, and a general comely silliness of aspect. Her speech had a characteristic slowness, an indolent drawl, all her words dragged as it were, so that those who did not know her were apt to accuse her of affectation. Those who did saw at once that she was a thoroughly well-meaning young person with much good humour and no want of sense, but with an entire absence of energy and application, a capacity of unlearning, a faculty of forgetting exactly suited to the part. She was, in short, the very Laurinda of the play.

Last of the quartet was Pastorella, a romantic nymph always in love. Truly she was well suited too ; having fallen to the lot of a very lovely girl, quite an Asiatic beauty, who, although not in the least addicted to any

such silly pastime, had an oriental languor in her slow and graceful movements, and a depth of tenderness in her large black eyes which gave a great verisimilitude to her representation of the lovelorn damsel. She was also an admirable musician, and Miss R. determined to call her sweet and passionate voice in aid of the illusion. So she was to sing some fervid Italian ditty to the accompaniment of her own harp; which would have just the proper sentimental air (your romantic young lady always does accompany herself on the harp, especially out of doors) and to be drest as much like the heroine of a novel as possible. Then came the shepherdess Florella. We had a charming Florella; a gentle, simple, country girl, whose round, slender figure, her golden hair, blue eyes, and glowing complexion, her innocent voice, and engaging smile, might have suited

———"the prettiest low-born lass that ever

Ran on the green-sward."——

She seemed born to wear little white hats wreathed with flowers, and jackets laced tightly to her small trim waist, to weave chaplets, tie up nosegays, and twist garlands round her crook.

Our dramatis personæ now wanted only the two daughters of Urania to be complete. These two daughters might almost have passed *pour des personnages muets*. They had scarcely ten lines between them; any body might have filled such parts, and yet the filling



them nearly overset our play. They had been overlooked at first, being really too unimportant to attract attention, and remained for two or three days totally forgotten ; till Zenobie, our clever dunce, and Charlotte, one of our managing Triad (her sister Catharine was ill, or she would have manœuvred for all three), took a fancy to act them, and immediately preferred a petition to that effect, which was readily granted. Nothing could equal the consternation of their mama elect when she heard this intelligence. To be a mama at all was bad enough ; but to have one daughter taller than herself, and another, who, though not tall, looked like an old fairy, was not to be endured. She flew to Miss R. Miss R. was sorry, but she had promised. She remonstrated, coaxed, argued, threatened, talked of resigning, did resign ; still no relaxation. The whole house was split into factions ; all who knew any thing of acting felt, with poor Urania, that the grouping required absolute children ; all who did not, sided with the popular favourites Zenobie and Charlotte. At last, after the manager's firmness and the prima donna's obstinacy had been well tried, after one whole day of turmoil and suspense, Charlotte's good humour decided the question. She prevailed on Zenobie to join her in withdrawing their request ; and Urania, well chidden for her presumption, penitent but triumphant, resumed her part, and at the end of a few days was even permitted to choose

her children. And an excellent choice she made. Our sweet little Irish girl, the sometime Pizarro, who did every thing but grow, and at twelve years of age looked eight, as at eight she had wit enough for twelve, played the eldest daughter; whilst a rosy, curly-pated, laughing brat of six, a perfect picture of a child, just like one of Sir Joshua's stepped down from the frame, lisped through the youngest to admiration. Nor were Charlotte and Zenobie forgotten. The three sisters formed a sort of chorus of shepherdesses in attendance on Florella, and sang and danced at the banquet; whilst, at the end of their dance, Zenobie, exquisitely dressed and armed with a superb garland of roses, darted forward and executed a *pas seul*. Such a *pas seul*! The French dancing-master declared that nothing like it had ever been seen in England. It was the only part of our play that was encored.

And now we began to experience, in its fullest enchantment, the extraordinary power that acting possesses over the human fancy,—the total absorption, the artificial importance, the busy idleness! The whole school was turned topsy turvy; nothing was thought of or talked of but our play; there was an entire pause and intermission of all lessons, an universal holiday. Those who did not act in the drama were wanted to act audience; and the making of paper flowers, the construction of pasteboard trellis-work, the painting and

decorating of Urania's bower, the only part of the scenery which we managed at home, (all the rest was hired from a private theatre) found full employment for little and great. The actresses were busy enough. Urania had her part to study and her dress; or rather she had to reconcile these perplexing contradictions,—to submit her decorations to the sedateness of her character, and to take away somewhat of age and gravity from her character to suit the elegance of her costume. Oh the coquetry of her point-lace cap! and the profuse and graceful folds of fine Indian muslin in which she was enveloped! She looked as much like a splendid young bride, and as little like a reduced elderly gentlewoman, as could be. Besides these weighty and opposing considerations, Urania undertook the charge of teaching her daughters and the shepherdess Florella; and was extra-officially employed in giving hints to all parties, from the harp mistress, who composed our songs, down to the shoemaker who furnished our sandals,—from the manager rehearsing, down to Laurinda trying to learn. The fair Euphelia, too, had a double difficulty to encounter, her dignity and the *th*. Oh those terrible consonants! she could manage all other English sounds. We changed every word we could; but there was no dispensing with the *thes* and the *thats*; so she was forced to go on *deing* and *datting* so prettily! we scarcely wished to cure such an imperfec-

tion. Pastorella's cares were of a gentler sort. She was engaged in the pleasant task of selecting the tenderest Italian song, and the most romantic trimming that fashion would permit. With the first she was easily suited; the last was rather a puzzle. First she fixed upon the heart's-ease, whose sentimental names, the *pensée*, and the love in idleness, rendered it peculiarly appropriate; but the heart's-ease is a daylight flower; its colours require the sun; the yellow looks white and the purple black by candle light; so that was given up. Then she tried the lily of the valley; that was too limp, and hung awkwardly;—then sprigs of myrtle; they were too stiff, and would not hang at all; so that she was fain to lay aside her softer emblems, and content herself with oak leaves and acorns. My troubles lay in a different direction. At first I had inwardly grieved over the play and the part and the prologue (which also fell to my lot) as a sad waste of talent; I had fallen into the pretty general error of mistaking the love of an art, for the power of excelling in it, and had longed to come out in Milton or Shakespeare. But I soon discovered, to the great improvement of my humility, that *The Search after Happiness* was only too good for me, in short, that I was about as bad an actress as ever trod the stage. To be sure, I did know my speeches by rote, and I also understood the sense of them; I could read the play decently

enough ; but in acting I was really deplorable ; shame and fear and awkwardness had set their mark on me ; there was no breaking the spell. My hands and arms especially were intolerable burthens. I never knew what to do with them ; and should certainly have resigned in despair, but for the relief of a fan in the prologue, and a most comfortable promise from Florella, to pop a nosegay into my hand the moment she came on the scene. Nothing less could have reconciled me to remaining in the company. In proportion as I disappointed my own expectations, Urania exceeded them. She was indeed a consummate actress, in voice, person, manner and expression. A pervading and indescribable grace, a fine quick intelligence, and a modest confidence, distinguished every word and motion. I was never weary of admiring her.—Perhaps I might almost have envied such powers in any one else ; but she was so kind-hearted, bore her faculties so meekly, was so ready to advise, and so eager to encourage and assist, that she quelled the evil spirit. She seemed perfectly unconscious of her high superiority ; except the natural desire not to look too old, she never betrayed one spark of vanity through the whole piece.

At last, after a whole month's busy preparation, the great day arrived, luckily one of the shortest in December ; for such a day of confusion and unrest and useless bustle I never encountered before or since. From sun-

rise to sunset we were all running after we knew not what, talking, spouting, singing, laughing, or crying, without a moment's intermission. My particular exercise was practising the circular curtsy, which I had been taught to make as prologue; I curtsied till I could hardly stand. Of course we had plenty of vexations, besides those which we chose to cultivate for our private diversion. First of all, the sandals were not finished. In spite of three several messages to the faithless shoemaker, the sandals never made their appearance till just half an hour after the shepherdesses had accomplished their dance in slippers. The fancy dresses of Urania's daughters never came at all; they were forced to play in white frocks. Then the decorations that did arrive, contrived to be almost as provoking as those that did not. A stupid milliner sent Euphelia a sky-blue plume to wear with her pink robe; Pastorella's new stays were two inches too large; Florella's jacket was three inches too small; and the green curtain a quarter of a yard too short. There was no end to the letting down, the letting out, and the taking in of that disastrous day. But the most perplexing of all our perplexities was occasioned by the innocent but unfortunate Laurinda. She had no mother, and was to be furnished with a splendid dress by her father's sister, viscountess A. We were anxiously looking out for the expected parcel, the lady aunt being in the country,

when a letter which arrived by post spread a general consternation and dismay. This letter, addressed to Laurinda, franked by the viscount, signed by the viscountess, and written by her maid, announced that the promised dress would be sent by the coach on Thursday, and they hoped would fit and please the intended wearer. Thursday! and this "the great, the important day" was Tuesday! Here was a calamity! We examined the letter again and again, spelt the word over and over, there it was plain and clear, T, h, u, the next letter was rather uncertain, it looked most like an r, but it might have passed for an e, without a loop, or an i, without a tittle. The Th was there as legible as copper-plate, and never did those two letters give greater perturbation to our dear countess, than to us the committee of management. One of us, however, on a closer perusal of the letter, found that "pleased" was spelt "plased," and, on examining Laurinda, we farther discovered that the waiting gentlewoman was Irish. It might therefore be purely an error in spelling, arising from a vicious pronunciation. But this conjecture was considered as rather super-subtle, and at all events we could not comfortably rely even on a *femme-de-chambre's* false spelling. So we held a council on the case, and had just resolved to omit the character altogether, when the paraphernalia arrived, and restored the fair wearer to the honours of the play-bill. Such a dress was worth

a little fright; it was equally superb and becoming: she looked like a peeress, in that magnificent birth-day suit; and within a few months she actually became one;—the earliest and best married of all our company was the gentle Laurinda.

At last the long and arduous duties of the tiring-room were over; and plumed and trained and spangled, pearl-powdered, or rouged, as fear and novelty made us look red or pale, we were safely escorted behind the green curtain, and left there by our manager, who resolved herself to join the company. Our theatre was a lofty spacious saloon, built after the house was erected, for the purpose of a dancing-room. It was well adapted to our present object, as it opened into another apartment by large folding doors; and the two together accommodated a very numerous and elegant audience. We behind the curtain had no way of communicating with the rest of the house except through a window, which looked from a considerable height into the garden. A ladder was placed at the window, and a maid servant stood within, and the gardener without, to perform any service that we might require. Miss R. had been much pleased with this temporary non-intercourse, this secure caging of her little birds; it was such an assurance of their not flying away, of which, in one instance at least, the danger had seemed imminent. She did not foresee the calamity that awaited us. Just as the



company was entering, and our orchestra beginning a grand concerto, Pastorella, who had succeeded in taking in her stays till she could scarcely breathe in them, between fright, and tight lacing, fainted away, and water was immediately called for. The gardener, whose ideas appear to have been rather professional, immediately handed up an enormous watering-pot, brimfull of the pure element, which the housemaid was carrying to the fainting lady, when Miss Jane, darting along with her usual officiousness, and more than her usual speed, in search of a bottle of sal volatile, threw poor Pastorella's own harp right against the well-loaded housemaid, and housemaid, harp, and watering-pot all fell together in the middle of the stage. The crash was startling; and our manager jumped over the foot lamps to investigate the cause. She found the sick damsel roused by the shock in time to save her laces, and very wisely engaged in washing off her rouge and relieving her heart by a plentiful shower of tears. Housemaid and harp, too, had been picked up unhurt; but the watering-pot was rolling about the stage, and the stage was floated, absolutely under water. The actresses were scudding about to the dry places, full of care for their silks and satins, some clinging to the bower, others climbing the side-scenes, perched amidst boughs and branches, and in great danger of bringing the whole forest about our ears. It was no time for scolding; so

the whole chain of delinquents, from the gardener to Miss Jane, escaped unchidden ; it was more “ germane to the matter ” to send for cloths and mops, and warming-pans, and more housemaids, and get the stage dry as soon as possible. The cold water had done us all good ; it had diverted our thoughts. Even I, in the midst of my tribulation, forgot for a moment that I was to speak the prologue and to open the play ;—alas ! only for a moment ! Our manager rejoined the company, the curtain drew up, and I advanced to make the famous curtsy, with just such a courage as a coward may assume, who is placed in the van in battle and cannot run away,—the desperate courage of fear. I think I can feel my heart beat now. There was no need of such palpitations. The audience came to be indulgent, and they were so. The prologue went off well ; and the play on the whole still better. I have not left room for particular accidents—and how one scene would not go back, or another come forward :—how Laurinda was stranded, and Urania helped her off :—how Pastorella’s harp was untuned by the fall and her voice by the crying, and how that untuneable song and the oak-leaf trimming won the heart of a young post captain, now her happy spouse :—how Florella forgot her crook, and Cleora walked through her train :—these, with other notable incidents, must remain untold. Suffice it, that Euphelia’s beauty, Urania’s acting, and Zenobie’s danc-

ing bore the bell ; and that after them, papas and uncles and grandpapas admired each his own.

Years have passed, and that blooming company is scattered far and wide. Some are married ; some are dead. But whenever a happy chance throws two or three of us together, the English teacher and her favourite play are sure to be amongst the first, the gayest, and the tenderest of our school-day recollections.

## A VISIT TO LUCY.

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LUCY who in her single state bore so striking a resemblance to Jenny Dennison in the number and variety of her lovers, continues to imitate that illustrious original in her married life by her dexterous and excellent management, of which I have been lately an amused and admiring witness. Not having seen her for a long time, tempted by the fineness of the day, the first day of summer, and by the pleasure of carrying to her a little housewifely present from her sometime mistress, we resolved to take a substantial luncheon at two o'clock, and drive over to drink tea with her at five, such being, as we well knew, the fashionable visiting hour at S.

The day was one glow of sunshine, and the road wound through a beautiful mixture of hill and dale and rich woodland, clothed in the brightest foliage, and thickly studded with gentlemen's seats, and prettier cottages, their gardens gay with the blossoms of the plum and the cherry, tossing their snowy garlands across

the deep blue sky. So we journeyed on through pleasant villages and shady lanes till we emerged into the opener and totally different scenery of M. Common; a wild district, always picturesque and romantic, but now peculiarly brilliant, and glowing with the luxuriant orange flowers of the furze in its height of bloom, stretching around us like a sea of gold, and loading the very air with its rich almond odour. Who would have believed that this brown, barren, shaggy heath could have assumed such splendour, such majesty? The farther we proceeded, the more beautiful it appeared, the more gorgeous, the more brilliant. Whether climbing up the steep bank, and mixing with the thick plantation of dark firs; or checquered with brown heath and green turf on the open plain, where the sheep and lambs were straying; or circling round the pool covered with its bright white flowers; or edging the dark morass inlaid with the silky tufts of the cotton grass; or creeping down the deep dell where the alders grow; or mixing by the roadside with the shining and varied bark, now white, now purplish, and the light tremulous leaves of the feathery birch-tree;—in every form or variety this furze was beauty itself. We almost lamented to leave it, as we wound down the steep hill of M. West-end, that most picturesque village, with its long open sheds for broom and faggot-making; its little country inn, the Red Lion; its pretty school just in the bottom, where

the clear stream comes bubbling over the road, and the romantic foot-bridge is flung across ; and with cottages straggling up the hill on the opposite ascent, orchards backed by meadows, and the light wreaths of smoke sailing along the green hill-side, the road winding amidst all, beside another streamlet whose deep rust-coloured scum gives token of a chalybeate spring.

Even this sweet and favourite scene, which, when I would think of the perfection of village landscape, of a spot to live and die in, rises unbidden before my eyes,—this dear and cherished picture which I generally leave so reluctantly—was hurried over now, so glad were we to emerge once more from its colder colouring into the full glory of the waving furze on S. common, brighter even than that of M. which we left behind us. Even Lucy's house was unheeded till we drove up to the door, and found, to our great satisfaction, that she was at home.

The three years that have elapsed since her marriage have changed the style of her beauty. She is grown very fat, and rather coarse ; and having moreover taken to loud speaking (as I apprehend a village schoolmistress must do in pure self-defence, that her voice may be heard in the *melée*), our airy sparkling soubrette, although still handsome, has been transmuted somewhat suddenly into a bustling merry country-dame, looking her full age, if not a little older. It is such a transition as a *rosebud* experiences when turned into a rose, such as might befall

the pretty coquette mistress Anne Page when she wedded master Fenton and became one of the merry wives of Windsor. Lucy, however, in her dark gown and plain cap (for her dress hath undergone as much alteration as her person), her smiles and her rosiness, is still as fair a specimen of country comeliness as heart can desire.

We found her very busy, superintending the operations of a certain she-tailor, a lame woman famous for button-holes, who travels from house to house in that primitive district, making and repairing men's gear, and who was at that moment endeavouring to extract a smart waistcoat for our friend the schoolmaster out of a remnant of calico and a blemished waistcoat-piece, which had been purchased at half-price for his behoof by his frugal help-mate. The more material parts of the cutting out had been effected before my arrival, considerably at the expense of the worthy pedagogue's comfort, although to the probable improvement of his shape; for certainly the new fabric promised to be at least an inch smaller than the pattern;—that point, however, had been by dint of great ingenuity satisfactorily adjusted, and I found the lady of the shears and the lady of the rod in the midst of a dispute on the question of buttons, which the tailoress insisted must be composed of metal or mother of pearl, or any thing but covered molds, inasmuch as there would be no stuff left to cover them; whilst Lucy on her side insisted that there was plenty, that any

thing (as all the world knew) would suffice to cover buttons if people were clever and careful, and that certain most diminutive and irregular scraps, which she gathered from the table and under it, and displayed with great ostentation, were amply sufficient for the purpose. "If the pieces are not big enough," continued she, "you have nothing to do but to join them." And as Lucy had greatly the advantage both in loudness of voice and fluency of thought and word, over the itinerant semstress, who was a woman of slow quiet speech, she carried her point in the argument most triumphantly, although whether the unlucky waistcoat-maker will succeed in stretching her materials so as to do the impossible remains to be proved, the button question being still undecided when I left S.

Her adversary being fairly silenced, Lucy laid aside her careful thoughts and busy looks; and leaving the poor woman to her sewing and stitching, and a little tidy lass (a sort of half-boarder, who acts half as servant, half as pupil), to get all things ready for tea, she prepared to accompany me to a pleasant coppice in the neighbourhood, famous for wild lilies of the valley, to the love of which delicate flower, she, not perhaps quite unjustly, partly attributed my visit.

Nothing could be more beautiful than the wood where they are found, which we reached by crossing first the open common, with its golden waves of furze, and then



a clover field intensely green, deliciously fresh and cool to the eye and the tread. The copse was just in its pleasantest state, having luckily been cut last year, and being too thinly clothed with timber to obstruct the view. It goes sloping down a hill, till it is lost in the green depths of P. Forest, with an abruptness of descent which resembles a series of terraces or rather ledges, so narrow that it is sometimes difficult to find a space on which to walk. The footing is the more precarious, as even the broader paths are intersected and broken by hollows and caves, where the ground has given way and been undermined by fox earths. On the steepest and highest of these banks, in a very dry unsheltered situation, the lily of the valley grows so profusely, that the plants almost cover the ground with their beautiful broad leaves, and the snowy white bells, which envelope the most delicate of odours. All around grow the fragile wind-flowers, pink as well as white; the coral blossoms of the whortle-berry; the graceful wood-sorrel; the pendent drops of the stately Solomon's seal, which hang like waxen tassels under the full and regular leaves; the bright wood-vetch; the unobtrusive woodroof, whose scent is like new hay, and which retains and communicates it when dried; and, lastly, those strange freaks of nature the orchises, where the portrait of an insect is so quaintly depicted in a flower. The bee orchis abounds also in the Maple-Durham woods—those woods where

whilome flourished the two stately but unlovely flowers Martha and Teresa Blount of *Popish* fame, and which are still in the possession of their family. But, although it is found at Maple-Durham as well as in these copses of North-Hampshire, yet, in the little slip of Berks which divides Hants from Oxfordshire, I have never been able to discover it. The locality of flowers is a curious puzzle. The field tulip, for instance, through whose superb pendent blossoms checquered with puce and lilac the sun shines as gloriously as through stained glass, and which, blended with a still more elegant white variety, covers whole acres of the Kennet meadows, can by no process be coaxed into another habitation, however apparently similar in situation and soil. Treat them as you may, they pine and die and disappear. The duke of Marlborough only succeeded in naturalizing them at White-Knights by the magnificent operation of transplanting half an acre of meadow, grass and earth and all, to the depth of two feet ! and even there they seem dwindling. The wood-sorrel, which I was ambitious of fixing in the shrubberies of our old place, served me the provoking trick of living a year or two, and bearing leaves, but never flowers ; and that far rarer but less beautiful plant, the field-star of Bethlehem,—a sort of large hyacinth of the hue of the misletoe, which, in its pale and shadowy stalk and blossom, has something to me awful, unearthly, ghastly, mystical, druidical,—used me still worse, not

only refusing to grow in a corner of our orchard where I planted it, but vanishing from the spot where I procured the roots, although I left at least twenty times as many as I took.

Nothing is so difficult to tame as a wild flower; and wisely so, for they generally lose much of their characteristic beauty by any change of soil or situation. That very wood-sorrel now, which I coveted so much, I saw the other day in a green-house! By what chance my fellow amateur persuaded that swamp-loving, cold-braving, shade-seeking plant to blossom in the very region of light, and heat, and dryness, I cannot imagine; but there it was in full bloom, as ugly a little abortion as ever showed its poor face, smaller far than in its native woods, the flowers unveined and colourless, and bolt upright, the leaves full spread and stiff,—no umbrella fold! no pendent grace! no changing hue! none but a lover's eye would have recognised the poor beauty of the woods in the faded prisoner of the green-house. No caged bird ever underwent such a change. I will never try to domesticate that pretty blossom again—content to visit it in its own lovely haunts, the bed of moss or the beech-root sofa.

The lily of the valley we may perhaps try to transplant. The garden is its proper home; it seems thrown here by accident; we cannot help thinking it an abasement, a condescension. The lily must be transportable.

For the present, however, we were content to carry away a basket of blossoms, reserving till the autumn our design of peopling a shady border in our own small territories, the identical border where in summer our geraniums flourish, with that simplest and sweetest of flowers.

We then trudged back to Lucy's to tea, talking by the way of old stories, old neighbours, and old friends—mixed on her part with a few notices of her new acquaintance, lively, shrewd, and good-humoured as usual. She is indeed a most agreeable and delightful person; I think the lately developed quality at which I hinted in my opening remarks, the slight tinge of Jenny-Dennison-ism, only renders her conversation more piquant and individualised, and throws her merits into sharper relief. We talked of old stories and new, and soon found she had lost none of her good gift in gossipry; of her thousand and one lovers, about whom, although she has quite left off coquetry, she inquired with a kindly interest; of our domestic affairs, and above all of her own. She has no children—a circumstance which I sometimes think she regrets; I do not know why, except that my dear mother having given her on her marriage, amongst a variety of parting gifts, a considerable quantity of baby things, she probably thinks it a pity that they should not be used. And yet the expensiveness of children might console her on the

one hand, and the superabundance of them with which she is blest in school-time on the other. Indeed she has now the care of a charity Sunday-school, in addition to her work-day labours—a circumstance which has by no means altered her opinion of the inefficacy and inexpediency of general education.

I suspect that the irregularity of payment is one cause of her dislike to the business ; and yet she is so ingenious a contriver in the matter of extracting money's worth from those who have no money, that we can hardly think her unreasonable in requiring the *hens-tailor* to cover buttons out of nothing. Where she can get no cash, she takes the debt in kind ; and, as most of her employers are in that predicament, she lives in this respect like the Loochooans, who never heard of a currency. She accommodates herself to this state of things with admirable facility. She has sold her cow, because she found she could be served with milk and butter by the wife of a small farmer who has four children at her school ; and has parted with her poultry and pigs, and left off making bread, because the people of both shops are customers to her husband in his capacity of shoemaker, and she gets bread, and eggs, and bacon for nothing. On the same principle she has commenced brewing, because the maltster's son and daughter attend her seminary, and she procured three new barrels, coolers, tubs, &c. from a cooper who was

in debt to her husband for shoes. "Shoes," or "children," is indeed the constant answer to the civil notice which one is accustomed to take of any novelty in the house. "Shoes" produced the commodious dressing-table and washing-stand, coloured like rose-wood, which adorn her bed-chamber; "children" were the source of the good-as-new roller and wheelbarrow which stand in the court; and to "shoes and children" united are they indebted for the excellent double hedge-row of grubbed wood which she took me to see in returning from the copse—"a brand (as she observed) snatched out of the fire; for the poor man who owed them the money must break, and had nothing useful to give them, except this wood, which was useless to him, as he had not money to get it grubbed up.—If he holds on till the autumn," continued Lucy, "we shall have a good crop of potatoes from the hedge-row. We have planted them on the chance." The ornamental part of her territory comes from the same fertile source. Even the thrift which adorns the garden (fit emblem of its mistress!) was a present from the drunken gardener of a gentleman in the neighbourhood. "He does not pay his little girl's schooling very regularly," quoth she! "but then he is so civil, poor man! any thing in the garden is at our service."

"Shoes and children" are the burden of the song. The united professions re-act on each other in a re-

markable manner;—shoes bring scholars, and scholars consume shoes. The very charity school before mentioned, a profitable concern, of which the payment depends on rich people and not on poor, springs indirectly from a certain pair of purple kid boots, a capital fit (I must do our friend, the pedagogue, the justice to say that he understands the use of his awl, no man better !) which so pleased the vicar's lady, who is remarkable for a neat ankle, that she not only gave a magnificent order for herself, and caused him to measure her children, but actually prevailed on her husband to give the appointment of Sunday school-master to this matchless cordwainer. I should not wonder if, through her powerful patronage, he should one day rise to be parish-clerk.

Well, the tea and the bread and butter were discussed with the appetite produced by a two hours' ride and a three hours' walk—to say nothing of the relish communicated to her viands by the hearty hospitality of our hostess, who “gaily pressed and smiled.” And then the present, our ostensible errand, a patch-work quilt, long the object of Lucy's admiration, was given with due courtesy, and received with abundance of pleased and blushing thanks.

At last the evening began to draw in, her husband who had been absent returned, and we were compelled

to set out homewards, and rode back with our basket of lilies through a beautiful twilight world, inhaling the fragrance of the blossomed furze, listening to the night-ingales, and talking of Lucy's good management.



## DOCTOR TUBB.

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EVERY country village has its doctor. I allude to that particular department of the medical world, which is neither physician, nor surgeon, nor apothecary, although it unites the offices of all three ; which is sometimes an old man, and sometimes an old woman, but generally an oracle, and always (with reverence be it spoken) a quack. Our village, which is remarkably rich in functionaries adorned with the true official qualities, could hardly be without so essential a personage. Accordingly we have a quack of the highest and most extended reputation in the person of Doctor Tubb, inventor and compounder of medicines, bleeder, shaver, and physicker of man and beast.

How this accomplished barber-surgeon came by his fame I do not very well know ; his skill he inherited (as I have been told) in the female line, from his great-aunt Bridget, who was herself the first practitioner of the day, the wise woman of the village, and bequeathed

to this favourite nephew her blessing, Culpepper's Herba, a famous salve for cuts and chilblains, and a still. This legacy decided his fate. A man who possessed a herbal and could read it without much spelling, who had a still and could use it, had already the great requisites for his calling. He was also blest with a natural endowment, which I take to be at least equally essential to the success of quackery of any sort, especially of medical quackery; namely, a prodigious stock of impudence. Moliere's hero,—who, having had the ill-luck to place the heart on the wrong side (I mean the right), and being reminded of his mistake, says coolly, "*nous avons changé tout cela*"—is modesty itself compared with the brazen front of Doctor Tubb. And it tells accordingly. Patients come to him from far and near; he is the celebrated person (*l'homme marquant*) of the place. I myself have heard of him all my life as a distinguished character, although our personal acquaintance is of a comparatively recent date, and began in a manner sufficiently singular and characteristic.

On taking possession of our present abode, about four years ago, we found our garden, and all the gardens of the straggling village-street in which it is situated, filled, peopled, infested by a beautiful flower, which grew in such profusion and was so difficult to keep under, that (poor pretty thing!) instead of being admired and che-

rished and watered and supported, as it well deserves to be, and would be if it were rare, it is disregarded, affronted, maltreated, cut down, pulled up, hoed out, like a weed. I do not know the name of this elegant plant, nor have I met with any one who does; we call it the Spicer, after an old naval officer who once inhabited the white house just above, and, according to tradition, first brought the seed from foreign parts. It is a sort of large veronica, with a profusion of white gauzy flowers streaked with red, like the apple blossom. Strangers admire it prodigiously; and so do I—every where but in my own garden.

I never saw any thing prettier than a whole bed of these spicers, which had clothed the top of a large heap of earth belonging to our little mason by the road-side. Whether the wind had carried the light seed from his garden, or it had been thrown out in the mould, none could tell; but there grew the plants as thick and close as grass in a meadow, and covered with delicate red and white blossoms like a fairy orchard. I never passed without stopping to look at them; and, however accustomed to the work of extirpation in my own territories, I was one day half-shocked to see a man, his pockets stuffed with the plants, two huge bundles under each arm, and still tugging away root and branch. "Poor pretty flower," thought I, "not even suffered to enjoy the waste by the road-side! chased from the very com-

mon of nature, where the thistle and the nettle may spread and flourish ! Poor despised flower !” This devastation did not, however, as I soon found, proceed from disrespect ; the spicer-gatherer being engaged in sniffing with visible satisfaction to the leaves and stalks of the plant, which (although the blossom is wholly scentless) emit when bruised a very unpleasant odour. “ It has a fine venomous smell,” quoth he in soliloquy, “ and will certainly when stilled be good for something or other.” This was my first sight of Doctor Tubb.

We have frequently met since, and are now well acquainted, although the worthy experimentalist considers me as a rival practitioner, an interloper, and hates me accordingly. He has very little cause. My quackery—for I plead guilty to a little of that aptness to offer counsel in very plain and common cases, which those who live much among poor people, and feel an unaffected interest in their health and comfort, can hardly help—my quackery, being mostly of the cautious, preventive, safe-side, common-sense order, stands no chance against the boldness and decision of his all-promising ignorance. He says, Do ! I say, Do not ! He deals in *stimuli*, I in sedatives ; I give medicine, he gives cordial waters. Alack ! alack ! when could a dose of rhubarb, even although reinforced by a dole of good broth, compete with a draught of peppermint, a licensed dram ? No ! no ! Doctor Tubb has no cause to fear my practice.

The only patient I ever won from the worthy empiric was his own wife, who had languished under his prescriptions for three mortal years, and at last stole down in the dusk of the evening, to hold a private consultation with me. I was not very willing to invade the doctor's territories in my own person, and really feared to undertake a case which had proved so obstinate ; I therefore offered her a ticket for the B. dispensary, an excellent charity, which has rescued many a victim from the clutches of our herbalist. But she said that her husband would never forgive such an affront to his skill, he having an especial aversion to the dispensary and its excellent medical staff, whom he was wont to call " book-doctors ;" so that wise measure was perforce abandoned. My next suggestion was more to her taste ; I counselled her " to throw physic to the dogs ;" she did so, and by the end of the week she was another woman. I never saw such a cure. Her husband never made such a one in all the course of his practice. By the simple expedient of throwing away his decoctions, she is become as strong and hearty as I am. *N. B.* For fear of misconception, it is proper to add, that I do not in the least accuse or suspect the worthy doctor of wishing to get rid of his wife—God forbid ! He is a tolerable husband, as times go, and performs no murders but in the way of his profession : indeed I think he is glad that his wife should be well again ; yet he cannot quite forgive the

cause of the cure, and continues boldly to assert in all companies, that it was a newly-discovered fomentation of *yarbs*, applied to her by himself about a month before, which produced this surprising recovery; and I really believe that he thinks so; one secret of the implicit confidence which he inspires, is that triumphant reliance on his own infallibility with which he is possessed—the secret perhaps of all creators of enthusiasm, from Mahomet and Cromwell to the

“ Prevailing poet, whose undoubting mind  
Believ’d the magic wonders that he sang.”

As if to make some amends to this prescriber-general for the patient of whom I had deprived him, I was once induced to seek his services medically, or rather surgically, for one of my own family,—for no less a person than May, poor pretty May! One November evening, her master being on a coursing visit in Oxfordshire, and May having been left behind as too much fatigued with a recent hard day’s work to stand a long dirty journey, (note that a greyhound, besides being exceedingly susceptible of bad weather and watery ways, is a worse traveller than any other dog that breathes; a miserable little pug, or a lady’s lap-dog, would, in a progress of fifty miles, tire down the slayer of hares and outrunner of race-horses),—May being, as I said, left behind slightly indisposed, the boy who has the care of her, no less a person than the runaway Henry, came suddenly

into the parlour to tell me that she was dying. Now May is not only my pet but the pet of the whole house, so that the news spread universal consternation ; there was a sudden rush of the female world to the stable, and a general feeling that Henry was right, when poor May was discovered stretched at full length in a stall, with no other sign of life than a tremendous and visible pulsation of the arteries about her chest—you might almost hear the poor heart beat, so violent was the action.—“ Bleeding !” “ She must be bled !” burst simultaneously from two of our corps ; and immediately her body-servant the boy, who stood compromising his dignity by a very unmanly shower of tears, vanished, and re-appeared in a few seconds, dragging Doctor Tubb by the skirts, who, as it was Saturday night, was exercising his tonsorial functions in the tap-room of the Rose, where he is accustomed to operate hebdomadally on half the beards of the parish.

The doctor made his entry apparently with considerable reluctance, enacting for the first and last time in his life the part of *Le Medecin malgré lui*. He held his razor in one hand and a shaving-brush in the other, whilst a barber's apron was tied round the shabby, rusty, out-at-elbow, second-hand, black coat, renewed once in three years, and the still shabbier black breeches, of which his costume usually consists. In spite of my seeming, as I really was, glad to see him, a compliment

which from me had at least the charm of novelty,—in spite of a very gracious reception, I never saw the man of medicine look more completely astray. He has a pale, meagre, cadaverous face at all times, and a long lank body that seems as if he fed upon his own physis (although it is well known that gin, sheer gin, of which he is by no means sparing, is the only distilled water that finds its way down his throat):—but on this night, between fright—for Henry had taken possession of him without even explaining his errand,—and shame to be dragged into my presence whilst bearing the *insignia* of the least dignified of his professions, his very wig, the identical brown scratch which he wears by way of looking professional, actually stood on end. He was followed by a miscellaneous procession of assistants, very kind, very curious, and very troublesome, from that noisy neighbour of ours, the well-frequented Rose inn. First marched mine host, red waistcoated and jolly as usual, bearing a huge foaming pewter pot of double X, a sovereign cure for all sublunary ills, and lighted by the limping hostler, who tried in vain to keep pace with the swift strides of his master, and held at arm's length before him a smoky horn lantern, which might well be called dark. Next tripped Miss Phœbe (this misadventure happened before the grand event of her marriage with the patten-maker), with a flaring candle in one hand and a glass of cherry-brandy, reserved by her mother



for grand occasions, in the other—*autre remède !* Then followed the motley crew of the tap-room; among whom figured my friend Joel, with a woman's apron tied round his neck, and his chin covered with lather, he having been the identical customer—the very shavee, whose beard happened to be under discussion when the unfortunate interruption occurred.

After the bustle and alarm had in some measure subsided, the doctor marched up gravely to poor May, who had taken no sort of notice of the uproar.

“ She must be bled !” quoth I.

“ She must be fomented and physicked !” quoth the doctor ; and he immediately produced from either pocket a huge bundle of dried herbs (perhaps the identical venomous-smelling spicer), which he gave to Miss Phœbe to make into a decoction *secundum artem*, and a huge horse-ball, which he proceeded to divide into boluses ;—think of giving a horse-ball to my May !

“ She must be bled immediately !” said I.

“ She must not !” replied the doctor.

“ You shall bleed her !” cried Henry.

“ I won't !” rejoined the doctor. “ She shall be fo”—*mented* he would have added ; but her faithful attendant, thoroughly enraged, screamed out, “ She sha'n't !” and a regular scolding match ensued, during which both parties entirely lost sight of the poor patient, and mine host of the Rose had very nearly succeeded in adminis-

tering his specific—the double X, which would doubtless have been as fatal as any prescription of licentiate or quack. The worthy landlord had actually forced open her jaws, and was about to pour in the liquor, when I luckily interposed in time to give the ale a more natural direction down his own throat, which was almost as well accustomed to such potations as that of Boniface. He was not at all offended at my rejection of his kindness, but drank to my health and May's recovery with equal good-will.

In the mean time the tumult was ended by my friend the cricketer, who, seeing the turn which things were taking, and quite regardless of his own plight, ran down the village to the lea, to fetch another friend of mine, an old gamekeeper, who set us all to rights in a moment, cleared the stable of the curious impertinents, flung the horse-ball on the dung-hill, and the decoction into the pond, bled poor May, and turned out the doctor ; after which, it is almost needless to say that the patient recovered.

## THE BLACK VELVET BAG.

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HAVE any of my readers ever found great convenience in the loss, the real loss, of actual tangible property, and been exceedingly provoked and annoyed when such property was restored to them? If so, they can sympathize with a late unfortunate recovery, which has brought me to great shame and disgrace. There is no way of explaining my calamity but by telling the whole story.

Last Friday fortnight was one of those anomalies in weather with which we English people are visited for our sins; a day of intolerable wind, and insupportable dust; an equinoctial gale out of season; a piece of March unnaturally foisted into the very heart of May; just as, in the almost parallel mis-arrangement of the English counties, one sees (perhaps out of compliment to this peculiarity of climate, to keep the weather in countenance as it were) a bit of Wiltshire plumped down in the very middle of Berkshire, whilst a great island of the county palatine of Durham figures in the centre of canny Northumberland. Be this as it may, on that re-

markably windy day did I set forth to the good town of B., on the feminine errand called shopping. Every lady who lives far in the country, and seldom visits great towns, will understand the full force of that comprehensive word ; and I had not been shopping for a long time : I had a dread of the operation, arising from a consciousness of weakness. I am a true daughter of Eve, a dear lover of bargains and bright colours ; and, knowing this, have generally been wise enough to keep, as much as I can, out of the way of temptation. At last a sort of necessity arose for some slight purchases, in the shape of two new gowns from London, which cried aloud for making. Trimmings, ribands, sewing-silk, and lining, all were called for. The shopping was inevitable, and I undertook the whole concern at once, most heroically resolving to spend just so much, and no more ; and half comforting myself that I had a full morning's work of indispensable business, and should have no time for extraneous extravagance.

There was, to be sure, a prodigious accumulation of errands and wants. The evening before, they had been set down in great form, on a slip of paper, headed thus—" things wanted."—To how many and various catalogues that title would apply, from the red bench of the peer, to the oaken settle of the cottager—from him who wants a blue riband, to him who wants bread and cheese ! My list was astounding. It was written in double columns,

in an invisible hand ; the long intractable words were brought into the ranks by the Procustes mode—abbreviation ; and, as we approached the bottom, two or three were crammed into one lot, clumped, as the bean-setters say, and designated by a sort of short-hand, a hieroglyphic of my own invention. In good open printing, my list would have cut a respectable figure as a catalogue, and filled a decent number of pages—a priced catalogue too ; for, as I had a given sum to carry to market, I amused myself with calculating the proper and probable cost of every article ; in which process I most egregiously cheated the shopkeeper and myself, by copying, with the credulity of hope, from the puffs in newspapers, and expecting to buy fine solid wearable goods at advertising prices. In this way I stretched my money a great deal farther than it would go, and swelled my catalogue ; so that, at last, in spite of compression and short-hand, I had no room for another word, and was obliged to crowd several small but important articles, such as cotton, laces, pins, needles, shoe-strings, &c. into that very irregular and disorderly storehouse—that place where most things deposited are lost—*my memory*, by courtesy so called.

The written list was safely consigned, with a well-filled purse, to my usual repository, a black velvet bag ; and, the next morning, I and my bag, with its nicely balanced contents of wants and money, were safely con-

veyed, in a little open carriage, to the good town of B. There I dismounted, and began to bargain most vigorously, visiting the cheapest shops, cheapening the cheapest articles, yet wisely buying the strongest and the best ; a little astonished, at first, to find every thing so much dearer than I had set it down, yet soon reconciled to this misfortune by the magical influence which shopping possesses over a woman's fancy—all the sooner reconciled, as the monitory list lay unlooked at, and unthought of, in its grave receptacle, the black velvet bag. On I went, with an air of cheerful business, of happy importance, till my money began to wax small. Certain small aberrations had occurred, too, in my œconomy. One article that had happened, by rare accident, to be below my calculation, and, indeed, below any calculation, calico at ninepence, fine, thick, strong, wide calico, at ninepence, (did ever man hear of any thing so cheap?) absolutely enchanted me, and I took the whole piece: then, after buying for M. a gown, according to order, I saw one that I liked better, and bought that too. Then I fell in love, was actually captivated by a sky-blue sash and handkerchief,—not the poor, thin, greeny colour which usually passes under that dishonoured name, but the rich, full tint of the noon-day sky ; and a cap-riband, really pink, that might have vied with the inside leaves of a moss-rose. Then, in hunting after cheapness, I got into obscure shops, where, not finding what I

asked for, I was fain to take something that they had, purely to make a proper compensation for the trouble of lugging out drawers, and answering questions.—Lastly, I was fairly coaxed into some articles by the irresistibility of the sellers,—by the demure and truth-telling look of a pretty quaker, who could almost have persuaded the head off one's shoulders, and who did persuade me that ell-wide muslin would go as far as yard and a half; and by the fluent impudence of a lying shopman, who, under cover of a well-darkened window, affirmed, on his honour, that his brown satin was a perfect match to my green pattern, and forced the said satin down my throat accordingly. With these helps, my money melted all too fast: at half past five my purse was entirely empty; and, as shopping with an empty purse has by no means the relish and savour of shopping with a full one, I was quite willing and ready to go home to dinner, pleased as a child with my purchases, and wholly unsuspecting the sins of omission, the errands unperformed, which were the natural result of my unconsulted *memoranda* and my treacherous memory.

Home I returned, a happy and proud woman, wise in my own conceit, a thrifty fashion-monger, laden, like a pedlar, with huge packages in stout brown-holland, tied up with whipcord, and genteel little parcels, papered and packthreaded in shopmanlike style.—At last we were safely stowed in the pony-chaise, which had much

ado to hold us, my little black bag lying, as usual, in my lap; when, as we ascended the steep hill out of B. a sudden puff of wind took at once my cottage-bonnet and my large cloak, blew the bonnet off my head, so that it hung behind me, suspended by the riband, and fairly snapped the string of the cloak, which flew away, much in the style of John Gilpin's, renowned in story. My companion, pitying my plight, exerted himself manfully to regain the fly-away garments, shoved the head into the bonnet, or the bonnet over the head (I do not know which phrase best describes the manœuvre), with one hand, and recovered the refractory cloak with the other. This last exploit was certainly the most difficult. It is wonderful what a tug he was forced to give, before that obstinate cloak could be brought round: it was swelled with the wind like a bladder, animated, so to say, like a living thing, and threatened to carry pony and chaise, and riders, and packages, backward down the hill, as if it had been a sail, and we a ship. At last the contumacious garment was mastered. We righted; and, by dint of sitting sideways, and turning my back on my kind comrade, I got home without any farther damage than the loss of my bag, which, though not missed before the chaise had been unladen, had undoubtedly gone by the board in the gale; and I lamented my old and trusty companion, without in the least foreseeing the use it would probably be of to my reputation.



Immediately after dinner (for in all cases, even when one has bargains to show, dinner must be discussed) I produced my purchases. They were much admired ; and the quantity, when spread out in our little room, being altogether dazzling, and the quality satisfactory, the cheapness was never doubted. Every body thought the bargains were exactly such as I meant to get—for nobody calculated ; and the bills being really lost in the lost bag, and the particular prices just as much lost in my memory (the ninepenny calico was the only article whose cost occurred to me), I passed, without telling any thing like a fib, merely by a discreet silence, for the best and thriftiest bargainer that ever went shopping. After some time, spent very pleasantly, in admiration on one side, and display on the other, we were interrupted by a demand for some of the little articles which I had forgotten. “ The sewing-silk, please ma’am, for my mistress’s gown.” “ Sewing-silk ! I don’t know—look about.” Ah, she might look long enough ! no sewing-silk was there.—“ Very strange !”—Presently came other inquiries—“ Where’s the tape, Mary ?”—“ The tape !”—“ Yes, my dear ; and the needles, pins, cotton, stay-laces, boot-laces ;”—“ the bobbin, the ferret, shirt-buttons, shoe-strings ?”—quoth she of the sewing-silk, taking up the cry ; and forthwith began a search as bustling, as active, and as vain, as that of our old spaniel, Brush, after a hare that has stolen away from her form.

At last she suddenly desisted from her rummage—"Without doubt, ma'am, they are in the reticule, and all lost," said she, in a very pathetic tone. "Really," cried I, a little conscience-stricken, "I don't recollect; perhaps I might forget." "Depend on it, my love, that Harriet's right," interrupted one, whose interruptions are always kind; "those are just the little articles that people put in reticules, and you never could forget so many things; besides, you wrote them down." "I don't know—I am not sure"—But I was not listened to; Harriet's conjecture had been metamorphosed into a certainty; all my sins of omission were stowed in the reticule; and, before bed-time, the little black bag held forgotten things enough to fill a sack.

Never was reticule so lamented by all but its owner; a boy was immediately dispatched to look for it, and, on his returning empty-handed, there was even a talk of having it cried. My care, on the other hand, was all directed to prevent its being found. I had had the good luck to lose it in a suburb of B. renowned for filching, and I remembered that the street was, at that moment, full of people: the bag did actually contain more than enough to tempt those who were naturally disposed to steal for stealing's sake; so I went to bed in the comfortable assurance that it was gone for ever. But there is nothing certain in this world—not even a thief's dishonesty. Two old women, who had pounced at once

on my valuable property, quarreled about the plunder, and one of them, in a fit of resentment at being cheated in her share, went to the mayor of B. and informed against her companion. The mayor, an intelligent and active magistrate, immediately took the disputed bag, and all its contents, into his own possession ; and, as he is also a man of great politeness, he restored it as soon as possible to the right owner. The very first thing that saluted my eyes, when I awoke in the morning, was a note from Mr. Mayor, with a sealed packet. The fatal truth was visible ; I had recovered my reticule, and lost my reputation.—There it lay, that identical black bag, with its name-tickets, its cambric handkerchief, its empty purse, its unconsulted list, its thirteen bills, and its two letters ; one from a good sort of lady-farmer, inquiring the character of a cook, with half a sonnet written on the blank pages ; the other from a literary friend, containing a critique on the plot of a play, advising me not to kill the king too soon, with other good counsel, such as might, if our mayor had not been a man of sagacity, have sent a poor authoress, in a Mademoiselle-Scuderi-mistake, to the Tower. That catastrophe would hardly have been worse than the real one. All my omissions have been found out. My priced list has been compared with the bills. I have forfeited my credit for bargaining. I am become a bye-word for

forgetting. Nobody trusts me to purchase a paper of pins, or to remember the cost of a penny riband. I am a lost woman. My bag is come back, but my fame is gone.

## WALKS IN THE COUNTRY.

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### THE DELL.

MAY 2nd.—A delicious evening;—bright sunshine; light summer air; a sky almost cloudless; and a fresh yet delicate verdure on the hedges and in the fields:—an evening that seems made for a visit to my newly-discovered haunt, the mossy dell, one of the most beautiful spots in the neighbourhood, which after passing times out of number the field which it terminates, we found out about two months ago from the accident of May's killing a rabbit there. May has had a fancy for the place ever since; and so have I.

Thither accordingly we bend our way;—through the village;—up the hill;—along the common;—past the avenue;—across the bridge; and by the mill. How deserted the road is to-night! We have not seen a single acquaintance, except poor blind Robert laden with his sack of grass plucked from the hedges, and the little boy that leads him. A singular division of labour!

Little Jem guides Robert to the spots where the long grass grows, and tells him where it is most plentiful; and then the old man cuts it close to the roots, and between them they fill the sack and sell the contents in the village. Half the cows in the street—for our baker, our wheelwright, and our shoemaker has each his Alderney—owe the best part of their maintenance to blind Robert's industry.

Here we are at the entrance of the corn-field which leads to the dell, and which commands so fine a view of the Loddon, the mill, the great farm, with its picturesque outbuildings, and the range of woody hills beyond. It is impossible not to pause a moment at that gate, the landscape, always beautiful, is so suited to the season and the hour,—so bright, and gay, and spring-like. But May, who has the chance of another rabbit in her pretty head, has galloped forward to the dingle, and poor May, who follows me so faithfully in all my wanderings, has a right to a little indulgence in hers. So to the dingle we go.

At the end of the field, which when seen from the road seems terminated by a thick dark coppice, we come suddenly to the edge of a ravine, on one side fringed with a low growth of alder, birch, and willow, on the other mossy, turfy, and bare, or only broken by bright tufts of blossomed broom. One or two old pollards almost conceal the winding road that leads

down the descent, by the side of which a spring as bright as crystal runs gurgling along. The dell itself is an irregular piece of broken ground, in some parts very deep, intersected by two or three high banks of equal irregularity, now abrupt and bare and rocklike, now crowned with tufts of the feathery willow or magnificent old thorns. Every where the earth is covered by short fine turf, mixed with mosses, soft, beautiful, and various, and embossed with the speckled leaves and lilac flowers of the arum, the paler blossoms of the common orchis, the enamelled blue of the wild hyacinth, so splendid in this evening light, and large tufts of oxslips and cowslips rising like nosegays from the short turf.

The ground on the other side of the dell is much lower than the field through which we came, so that it is mainly to the labyrinthine intricacy of these high banks that it owes its singular character of wildness and variety. Now we seem hemmed in by those green cliffs, shut out from all the world, with nothing visible but those verdant mounds and the deep blue sky; now by some sudden turn we get a peep at an adjoining meadow where the sheep are lying, dappling its sloping surface like the small clouds on the summer heaven. Poor harmless quiet creatures, how still they are! Some socially lying side by side; some grouped in threes and fours; some quite apart. Ah! there are lambs amongst them—pretty, pretty lambs!—nestled in by their mo-

thers. Soft, quiet, sleepy things! Not all so quiet though! There is a party of these young lambs as wide awake as heart can desire; half a dozen of them playing together, frisking, dancing, leaping, butting, and crying in the young voice, which is so pretty a diminutive of the full-grown bleat. How beautiful they are with their innocent spotted faces, their mottled feet, their long curly tails, and their light flexible forms, frolicking like so many kittens, but with a gentleness, an assurance of sweetness and innocence which no kitten, nothing that ever is to be a cat, can have. How complete and perfect is their enjoyment of existence. Ah! little rogues! your play has been too noisy; you have awakened your mamas; and two or three of the old ewes are getting up; and one of them marching gravely to the troop of lambs has selected her own, given her a gentle butt, and trotted off; the poor rebuked lamb following meekly, but every now and then stopping and casting a longing look at its playmates; who, after a moment's awed pause, had resumed their gambols; whilst the stately dam every now and then looked back in her turn, to see that her little one was following. At last she lay down and the lamb by her side. I never saw so pretty a pastoral scene in my life\*.

\* I have since seen one which affected me much more. Walking in the Church-lane with one of the young ladies of the vicarage, we met a large flock of sheep with the usual retinue of shepherds and



Another turning of the dell gives a glimpse of the dark coppice by which it is backed, and from which we are separated by some marshy, rushy ground, where the springs have formed into a pool, and where the moor-hen loves to build her nest. Aye, there is one scudding away now;—I can hear her plash into the water, and the rustling of her wings amongst the rushes. This is the deepest part of the wild dingle. How un-

dogs. Lingered after them and almost out of sight we encountered a straggling ewe, now trotting along, now walking, and every now and then stopping to look back and bleating. A little behind her came a lame lamb, bleating occasionally as if in answer to its dam, and doing its very best to keep up with her. It was a lameness of both the fore feet; the knees were bent, and it seemed to walk on the very edge of the hoof—on tip-toe if I may venture such an expression. My young friend thought that the lameness proceeded from original malformation, I am rather of opinion that it was accidental, and that the poor creature was wretchedly foot-sore. However that might be, the pain and difficulty with which it took every step were not to be mistaken; and the distress and fondness of the mother, her perplexity as the flock passed gradually out of sight, the effort with which the poor lamb contrived to keep up a sort of trot, and their mutual calls and lamentations were really so affecting that Ellen and I, although not at all larmoyante sort of people, had much ado not to cry. We could not find a boy to carry the lamb, which was too big for us to manage;—but I was quite sure that the ewe would not desert it, and as the dark was coming on we both trusted that the shepherds on folding their flock would miss them and return for them;—and so I am happy to say it proved.

even the ground is! Surely these excavations, now so thoroughly clothed with vegetation, must originally have been huge gravel pits; there is no other way of accounting for the labyrinth, for they do dig gravel in such capricious meanders; but the quantity seems incredible. Well! there is no end of guessing! We are getting amongst the springs, and must turn back. Round this corner where on ledges like fairy terraces the orchises and arums grow, and we emerge suddenly on a new side of the dell, just fronting the small homestead of our good neighbour Farmer Allen.

This rustic dwelling belongs to what used to be called in this part of the country "a little bargain:" thirty or forty acres, perhaps, of arable land, which the owner and his sons cultivated themselves, whilst the wife and daughters assisted in the husbandry and eked out the slender earnings by the produce of the dairy, the poultry yard, and the orchard;—an order of cultivators now passing rapidly away, but in which much of the best part of the English character, its industry, its frugality, its sound sense, and its kindness might be found. Farmer Allen himself is an excellent specimen, the cheerful, venerable old man with his long white hair, and his bright gray eye, and his wife is a still finer. They have had a hard struggle to win through the world and keep their little property undivided; but good management and good principles and the assist-

ance afforded them by an admirable son, who left our village a poor 'prentice boy, and is now a partner in a great house in London, have enabled them to overcome all the difficulties of these trying times, and they are now enjoying the peaceful evening of a well-spent life as free from care and anxiety as their best friends could desire.

Ah! there is Mrs. Allen in the orchard, the beautiful orchard, with its glorious garlands of pink and white, its pearly pear-blossoms and coral apple-buds. What a flush of bloom it is! How brightly delicate it appears, thrown into strong relief by the dark house and the weather-stained barn, in this soft evening light. The very grass is strewed with the snowy petals of the pear and the cherry. And there sits Mrs. Allen, feeding her poultry, with her three little grand-daughters from London, pretty fairies from three years old to five (only two and twenty months elapsed between the birth of the eldest and the youngest) playing round her feet.

Mrs. Allen, my dear Mrs. Allen, has been that rare thing a beauty, and although she be now an old woman I had almost said that she is so still. Why should I not say so? Nobleness of feature and sweetness of expression are surely as delightful in age as in youth. Her face and figure are much like those which are stamped indelibly on the memory of every one who ever saw that grand specimen of woman Mrs. Siddons. The outline of Mrs. Allen's face is exactly the same; but there is more

softness, more gentleness, a more feminine composure in the eye and in the smile. Mrs. Allen never played Lady Macbeth. Her hair, almost as black as at twenty, is parted on her large fair forehead and combed under her exquisitely neat and snowy cap, a muslin neck-kerchief, a gray stuff gown, and a white apron complete the picture.

There she sits under an old elder tree which flings its branches over her like a canopy, whilst the setting sun illumines her venerable figure and touches the leaves with an emerald light ; there she sits placid and smiling, with her spectacles in her hand and a measure of barley on her lap, into which the little girls are dipping their chubby hands and scattering the corn amongst the ducks and chickens with unspeakable glee. But those ingrates the poultry don't seem so pleased and thankful as they ought to be ; they mistrust their young feeders. All domestic animals dislike children, partly from an instinctive fear of their tricks and their thoughtlessness, partly, I suspect, from jealousy. Jealousy seems a strange tragic passion to attribute to the inmates of the basse cour,—but only look at that strutting fellow of a bantam cock (evidently a favourite) who sidles up to his old mistress with an air half affronted and half tender, turning so scornfully from the barley-corns which Annie is flinging towards him, and say if he be not as jealous as Othello ? Nothing can pacify him but Mrs. Allen's notice and a dole from her hand. See she is

calling to him and feeding him, and now how he swells out his feathers, and flutters his wings, and erects his glossy neck, and struts and crows and pecks, proudest and happiest of bantams, the pet and glory of the poultry yard !

In the meantime my own pet May, who has all this while been peeping into every hole, and penetrating every nook and winding of the dell, in hopes to find another rabbit, has returned to my side and is sliding her snake-like head into my hand, at once to invite the caress which she likes so well, and to intimate with all due respect that it is time to go home. The setting sun gives the same warning ; and in a moment we are through the dell, the field and the gate, past the farm and the mill, and hanging over the bridge that crosses the Loddon river.

What a sunset ! how golden ! how beautiful ! The sun just disappearing, and the narrow liny clouds which a few minutes ago lay like soft vapoury streaks along the horizon lighted up with a golden splendour that the eye can scarcely endure, and those still softer clouds which floated above them wreathing and curling into a thousand fantastic forms as thin and changeful as summer smoke, now defined and deepened into grandeur and edged with ineffable, insufferable light ! Another minute and the brilliant orb totally disappears, and the sky above grows every moment more varied and more

beautiful as the dazzling golden lines are mixed with glowing red and gorgeous purple, dappled with small dark specks and mingled with such a blue as the egg of the hedge-sparrow. To look up at that glorious sky, and then to see that magnificent picture reflected in the clear and lovely Loddon water is a pleasure never to be described and never forgotten. My heart swells and my eyes fill as I write of it, and think of the immeasurable majesty of nature, and the unspeakable goodness of God who has spread an enjoyment so pure, so peaceful, and so intense before the meanest and the lowliest of His creatures.

## EARLY RECOLLECTIONS.

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### FRENCH EMIGRANTS.

DURING the time that I spent at school, I was in the habit of passing the interval, from Saturday afternoon to Monday morning, at the house of a female relative who resided in London. This lady had married a French emigrant of high family, who, being a man of sense and ability, applied himself with diligence to mercantile pursuits, dropped his title, anglicised his name and habits, and, by dint of his own talents and his wife's fortune, soon became a thriving man on 'Change. I believe he would have been very sorry to exchange his new station for his old, his credit at Lloyd's for his marquissate, his house in Brunswick-square for his Norman chateau, or his little wife for any thing. He was become at all points an Englishman, ate roast-beef and plum-pudding with a truly national relish, drank Port wine and porter, spoke our language almost like a native,

read Pope, talked of Shakspeare, and pretended to read Milton. Could complaisance go farther ?

He did not, however, in his love for his adopted country, forget that in which he was born : still less did he neglect the friends and countrymen who, less-fortunate than himself, languished in London and the suburbs in a miserable and apparently hopeless poverty. Nothing could exceed the kindness and politeness, with which all whom he had ever known, and many who were now first introduced to him, were received by himself and his good little wife at their hospitable table. Seldom a day passed without one or more guests dropping in, sure of the most cordial welcome ; but Saturday was the regular French day ; on that day there was always a *petit souper* for Mr. S.'s especial coterie ; and in the evening the conversation, music, games, manners, and cookery, were studiously and decidedly French. Trictrac superseded chess or backgammon, reversi took the place of whist, Gætry of Mozart, Racine of Shakspeare ; omelettes and salads, Champagne moussu, and *eau sucré*, excluded sandwiches, oysters, and porter.

At these suppers their little school-girl visitor of course assisted, though at first rather in the French than the English sense of the word. I was present indeed, but had as little to do as possible either with speaking or eating. To talk French and to discuss French dishes (two evils which I constantly classed together) seemed



to me an actual insult on that glorious piece of British freedom, a half-holiday,—a positive attack on the liberty of the subject. Accordingly, as far as a constant repetition of blushing noes (not *nons*) inwardly angry and outwardly shy, could proclaim my displeasure, I did not fail. Luckily the sentiment was entirely unsuspected by every one but my good cousin, a person of admirable sense, who, by dint of practising the let-alone system (the best system of all when a prejudice is to be overcome), aided by a little innocent artifice on her part, and something of latent curiosity, abetted by the keenness of a girlish appetite, on mine, succeeded in passing off a slice of a superb *tête du sanglier* for a new sort of Oxford brawn; and then, as in the matter of heads and suppers *ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte*, left it to my own senses to discover the merits of brioche and mar-rangles and eau de groseille. In less than three months I became an efficient consumer of good things, left off my noes and my sulkiness, and said “oui, monsieur,” and, “merci, madame,” as often as a little girl of twelve years old ought to say any thing.

I confess, however, that it took more time to reconcile me to the party round the table, than to the viands with which it was covered. In truth they formed a motley groupe, reminding me now of a masquerade and then of a puppet-show; and, although I had been brought up in habits of proper respect for rank and age

and poverty, yet there were contrasts and combinations about these coteries too ludicrous not to strike irresistibly the fancy of an acute observing girl, whose perception of the ridiculous was rendered keener by an invincible shyness which confined the enjoyment entirely to her own breast. The etiquette, the rouge, the coquetry, the self-importance of those poor draggle-tailed duchesses and countesses; the buttoned-up crosses, the bows and shrugs of their out-at-elbow dukes and counts; their mutual flatteries, their court jealousies and court hatreds, buttoned up like the crosses, but like them peeping out from the breast, the total oblivion which pervaded the whole party of poor England and all its concerns, the manner in which they formed a little nation in the midst of London, and the comfortable vanity which thought and called that little circle of emigrants the great nation; all this, together with the astounding rapidity and clatter of tongues, the vehemence of gesticulation, and the general sharp and withered look of so many foreign faces, working in every variety of strong expression, formed a picture so new and amusing, that I may be pardoned if I did not at first fully appreciate the good-humoured resignation, the cheerful philosophy, which bore all that they had lost so well, and found so much comfort in the little that remained; the happy art of making the best of things, which rendered even their harmless personal vanity, their pride in a lost station,

and their love of a country which they might never see again, pleasant and respectable.

At first I only looked on them in the groupe ; but I soon learned to individualize the more constant visitors, those who had been ten years before accustomed to spend their evenings in the superb hotel of the duchesse d'\*\*\*, glittering with gilding and lined with mirrors, and whose gayest and most splendid meetings were now held in the plain undecorated drawing-room of a substantial merchant in Brunswick-square. I shall attempt to sketch a few of them as they then appeared to me, beginning, as etiquette demands, with the duchess.

She was a tall meagre woman, of a certain age (that is to say, on the wrong side of sixty), with the peculiarly bad unsteady walk, something between a trip and a totter, that Frenchwomen of rank used to acquire from their high heels and the habit of never using their feet. Her face bore the remains of beauty, and would still have been handsome, had not the thin cheeks and hollow eyes, and the pale trembling lips, been contrasted almost to ghastliness by a quantity of glaring rouge, and very white teeth, constantly displayed by a smile originally perhaps artificial, but which long habit had rendered natural. Her dress was always simple in its materials, and delicately clean. She meant the fashion to be English, I believe,—at least she used often to say “*me voilà mise à l'Angloise ;*” but, as neither herself,

nor her faithful *femme de chambre*, could or would condescend to seek for patterns from *les grosses bourgeoises de ce Londres là bas*, they unconsciously relapsed into the old French shapes ; and madame la duchesse, in her hideous shrouding cap, with frills like flounces, and her long-waisted pigeon-breasted gown, might really have served for a model of the fashion of Paris at the epoch of the emigration. Notwithstanding these take-offs, our good duchess had still the air of a lady of rank and a gentlewoman,—a French gentlewoman ; for there was too much coquetry and affectation, too pervading a consciousness, for English gentility. Her manner was very pleasant and affable towards her usual associates, and with strangers condescending, protecting, gracious ; making remarks and asking questions without waiting for answers, in the manner usual with crowned heads. She had contracted this habit from having at one time of her life enjoyed great influence at court,—an influence which, with her other advantages of rank and fortune, had been used so kindly as to retain friends and secure gratitude even in the heat of the Revolution.—Most amply did she repay this gratitude. It was beautiful to hear the ardent thankfulness with which she would relate the story of her escape, and the instances of goodness and devotion which met her at every step. She accounted herself the most fortunate of women, for having, in company with a faithful *femme de chambre*,

at last contrived to reach England with jewels enough concealed about their persons to purchase an annuity sufficient to secure them a snug apartment up two pair of stairs in a retired street, and to keep them in soups and salad, with rouge and snuff into the bargain. No small part of her good fortune was the vicinity of her old friend the marquis L., a little thin withered old man with a prodigious mobility of shoulders and features, a face puckered with wrinkles, and a prodigious volubility of tongue. This gentleman had been madame's devoted beau for the last forty years;—I speak it in all honour, for, beautiful as she had been, the breath of scandal never glanced on the fair fame of the duchess. They could not exist without an interchange of looks and sentiments, a mutual intelligence, a gentle gallantry on the one side, and a languishing listening on the other, which long habit had rendered as necessary to both as their snuff-box or their coffee. It really was a peculiar stroke of good fortune, that, after a separation of eight months, each fearing that the other had fallen by the guillotine, caused them to take lodgings in adjoining streets in the same parish.

The next person in importance to the duchess was madame de V., sister to the marquis. Perhaps (though she had never filled a tabouret at Versailles\*), she was, in the existing state of things, rather the greater lady of

\* A privilege annexed to the rank of duchess; that of being seated in the royal presence.

the two. Her husband, who had acted in a diplomatic capacity in the stormy days preceding the Revolution, still maintained his station at the exiled court, and was at the moment of which I write employed on a secret embassy to an unnamed potentate ; some thought one emperor or king, some another, some guessed the pope, and some the grand seignor ; for, in the dearth of Bourbon news, this mysterious mission excited a lively and animated curiosity amongst these sprightly people. It was a pretty puzzle for them, a conundrum to their taste. Madame kept the secret well,—if she knew it. I rather suspect she did not ; she talked so very much that it certainly would have escaped her. In person she was quite a contrast to the duchess ; short, very crooked, with the sharp odd-looking face and keen eye that so often accompany deformity. She added to these good gifts a prodigious quantity of rouge and finery, mingling ribands, feathers, and beads of all the colours of the rainbow, with as little scruple as a *belle* of the South Seas would discover in the choice of her decorations. She was on excellent terms with all who knew her, unless perhaps there might be a little jealousy of station between her and the duchess, who had no great affection for one who seemed likely to “ push her from her stool.” She was also on the best possible terms with herself, in spite of the looking-glass, whose testimony, indeed, was so positively contradicted by certain couplets and acrostics

addressed to her by M. le comte de C., and the chevalier des I., the poets of the party, that to believe one uncivil dumb thing against two witnesses of such undoubted honour, would have been a breach of politeness of which madame was incapable. Notwithstanding this piece of womanly blindness, she was an excellent person, a good sister, good mother, and good wife. .

Of the comte de C., I shall say nothing, except that he was a poet, and the most remarkable individual of the party, being more like a personification of a German play than a living man of flesh and blood. His contradictions and oddities quite posed me at the ripe age of twelve; but the gentleman was a poet, and that, as poor madame used to say, accounts for every thing.

His wife was just such a person as Rubens has often painted, tall, large, and finely complexioned. She would have been very handsome but for one terrible drawback;—she squinted; not much, not glaringly; it was a very little squint, the least in the world, but a squint it certainly was, quite enough to diminish the lustre of her beauty. Even when from the position of her face we happened not to see it, the consciousness that there it was broke the charm. I cannot abide these “cross-eyes,” as the country people call them; though I have heard of ladies who, from the spirit of partizanship, admired those of Mr. Wilkes. The French gentlemen did not seem to participate in my antipathy; for the

countess was regarded as the beauty of the party. Agreeable she certainly was, lively, witty, abounding in repartee and innocent mischief, playing off a variety of amusing follies herself, and bearing with great philosophy the eccentricities of her husband. She had also an agreeable little dog called Amour; a pug, the smallest and ugliest of the species, who regularly after supper used to jump out of a muff, where he had lain perdu all the evening, and make the round of the supper-table, begging cake and biscuits. He and I had established a great friendship; he regularly, after levying his contributions all round, came to me for a game at play, and sometimes carried his partiality so far, as on hearing my voice to pop his poor little black nose out of his hiding-place before the appointed time. It required several repetitions of *Fi donc* from his mistress to drive him back behind the scenes till she gave him his cue.

No uncommon object of her wit was the mania of a smug and smooth-faced little abbé, the politician *par excellence*, where all were politicians, just as madame de V. was the talker amongst a tribe of talkers. M. l'Abbé must have been an exceeding bore to our English ministers, whom by his own showing he pestered weekly with laboured memorials,—plans for a rising in La Vendée, schemes for an invasion, proposals to destroy the French fleet, offers to take Antwerp, and plots for carrying off Buonaparte from the opera-house, and lodging him in



the Tower of London. This last was his favourite project; and well it might be, for a bolder idea never entered the mind of man. Imagine the abduction of the emperor, in the midst of his court and guards and his good city of Paris! Fancy him carried off by the unassisted prowess and dexterity of M. l'Abbé, and deposited in the Tower, like a piece of old armour, or a lion newly caught, whilst all France was staring and running about in search of her ruler, like the Harlowe family after the *enlèvement* of Miss Clarissa! What a master-stroke would this have been! Ministers, as he used to complain, refused to avail themselves of this brilliant idea, thereby prolonging the war and incurring a needless waste of lives and treasure. Indeed any little misfortune that befel our government, the sinking of an East-Indiaman, the failure of an expedition, or the loss of a motion, was commonly ascribed by him to the neglect of his advice; whilst, on the other hand, any eminent success in the cabinet, the parliament, or the field, was pretty sure to be traced up by him to some one of his numerous suggestions. Of the victory at Trafalgar, for instance, we English people have generally attributed the merit to the great commander who fell in the fight; but (I do not exactly remember on what score) he claimed full half of the honour; and doubtless he ascribes the campaigns in Spain, the frost in Russia, the burning of Moscow, the capture of Paris, the crowning

victory at Waterloo, and the restoration and establishment of the Bourbons; in a great measure, if not wholly, to the effect of his counsels. I would lay a wager that he is at this moment wasting reams of paper in memorialising the French government on this subject, as well as favouring them with hints on any other that falls in his way. In the matter of advice and projects, his liberality is unbounded. He alone, of all the Brunswick-square coterie, condescended to bestow the slightest attention on English affairs, and had the goodness to apply himself with unfeigned earnestness to the improvement of our condition. Thus, whilst one pocket was filled with proposals to cut off the French army, and schemes to blow up the Tuilleries, (for though one of the most benevolent and mild-tempered men on earth, he was a perfect Guy Vaux on paper), the other was crammed with plans to pay off the national debt, thoughts on the commutation of tithes, and hints for a general enclosure bill. He had usually some little private projects too, and many an unwary fellow-speculator hath rued his patents for making coals better than those of Newcastle out of dirt and ashes, his improved Argand lamps, and self-working fishing-nets. In short, he was a thorough projector, one that "never was, but always to be," rich; quick, imaginative, plausible, eloquent, and the more dangerous because he was thoroughly honest, and had himself an entire faith in one scheme,

till it was chased away by another,—a bubble like the rest !

Then came the chevalier des I.—

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“ By my life,  
That Davies hath a mighty pretty wife !”

The chevalier was a handsome man himself, tall, dark-visaged and whiskered, with a look rather of the new than of the old French school, fierce and soldierly ; he was accomplished, too, in his way, played the flute, and wrote songs and enigmas ; but his wife was undoubtedly the most remarkable thing belonging to him ; not that she was a beauty either ; I should rather call her the prettiest of pretty women ; she was short, well-made with fine black eyes, long glossy black hair, a clear brown complexion, a cocked-up nose, red lips, white teeth, and a most bewitching dimple. There was a tasteful smartness in her dress, which with a *gentillesse* in her air, and a piquancy of expression, at once told her country, and gave a promise of intelligence and feeling. No one could look at her without being persuaded that she was equally sensible and lively ; but no one could listen to her without discovering the mistake. She was the silliest Frenchwoman I ever encountered,—I have met with some as stupid among my own countrywomen ; Heaven forbid that we should in any thing yield the palm to our neighbours ! She never opened her lips without uttering some *bétise*. Her poor hus-

band, himself not the wisest of men, quite dreaded her speaking ; for, besides that he was really fond of her, he knew that the high-born circle of which she formed a part, would be particularly on the watch for her mistakes, as she was *roturière*, the daughter of a farmer-general who had fallen a sacrifice to the inhuman tyranny of Robespierre, leaving her no dower but her beauty. She was a most innocent and kind-hearted person, and devotedly attached to her husband ; and yet his bitterest enemy could hardly have contrived to say more provoking things to and of him than she did in her fondness. I will give one instance ; I might give fifty.

L'Abbé de Lille, the celebrated French poet, and M. de Calonne, the no less noted ex-minister, had promised one Saturday to join the party in Brunswick-square. They came ; and our chevalier, who had a tolerable opinion of his own powers as a verse-maker, could not miss so fair an opportunity of display. Accordingly, about half an hour before supper, he put on a look of *distraction*, strode hastily two or three times up and down the room, slapped his forehead, and muttered a line or two to himself ; then calling hastily for pen and paper, began writing with the illegible rapidity of one who fears to lose a happy thought, a life-and-death kind of speed ; then stopped a moment, as pausing for a word, then went on again fast, fast ; then

read the lines, or seemed to read ; then made a slight alteration ;—in short, he acted incomparably the whole agony of composition, and finally with becoming diffidence presented the impromptu to our worthy host, who immediately imparted it to the company. It was heard with the lively approbation with which verses of compliment, read aloud in presence of the author and of the parties complimented, are sure to be received ; and really, as far as I remember, the lines were very neatly turned. At last the commerce of flattery ceased. Bows, speeches, blushes, and apologies, were over ; the author's excuses, the ex-minister's and the great poet's thanks, and the applause of the audience, died away ; all that could be said about the impromptu was exhausted, the topic was fairly worn out, and a pause ensued, which was broken by madame des-I. who had witnessed the whole scene with intense pleasure, and now exclaimed, with tears standing in her beautiful eyes, " How glad I am they like the impromptu ! My poor dear chevalier ! No tongue can tell what pains it has cost him ! There he was all yesterday evening, writing, writing,—all the night long—never went to bed,—all to-day—only finished just before we came,—My poor dear chevalier ! I should have been so sorry, if they had not liked his impromptu ! Now he'll be satisfied." Be it recorded to the honour of French politeness, that, finding it impossible to stop or to out-

talk her (both which experiments were tried), the whole party pretended not to hear, and never once alluded to this impromptu *fait à loisir*, till the discomfited chevalier sneaked off with his pretty simpleton, smiling and lovely as ever, and wholly unconscious of offence. Then, to be sure, they did laugh.

I have committed a great breach of etiquette in mentioning the chevalier and his lady before the Baron de G. and his daughter Angelique. I question if the baron would forgive me; for he was of Alsace, and, though he called himself French, had German blood and quarterings, and pride enough for a prince of the empire. He was a fine-looking man of fifty, tall, upright, and active, and still giving tokens of having been in his youth one of the handsomest figures and best dancers at Versailles. He was the least gay of the party, perhaps the least happy; for his pride kept him in a state of prickly defiance against all mankind. He had the miserable jealousy of poverty, of one "fallen from his high estate," suspected insults where they were never dreamed of, and sifted civility, to see whether an affront, a lurking snake, might be concealed beneath the roses. The smallest and most authorised present, even fruit and game, were peremptorily rejected; and, if he accepted the Saturday-evening's invitation, it was evidently because he could not find in his heart to refuse a pleasure to his daughter. Angelique was, indeed, a

charming creature, fair, blooming, modest and gentle, far more English than French in person, manner, and dress, doting on her father, soothing his little infirmities of temper, and ministering in every way to his comfort and happiness. Never did a father and a daughter love each other better; and that is saying much. He repaid her care and affection with the most unbounded fondness, and a liberality that had no limit but his power. Mademoiselle de G. was the best-drest, best-lodged, and best-attended of any lady of the circle. The only wonder was how the baron could afford it. Every one else had some visible resource, of which they were so little ashamed, that it was as freely communicated as any news of the day. We all knew that the ambassadress and her brother the marquis lived together on a small pension allotted to the lady by a foreign court, in reward of certain imputed services rendered to the Bourbons by her husband; that the count taught French, Latin, and Italian; that the abbé contrived in some way or other to make his projects keep him; and that the pretty wife of the chevalier, more learned in bonnets than in impromptus, kept a very tasty and well-accustomed milliner's shop somewhere in the region of Cranbourne-alley: but the baron's means of support continued as much a puzzle as the ambassador's destination. At last chance let me into the secret. Our English dancing-master waxed old and rich, and re-

tired from the profession ; and our worthy governess vaunted loudly of the French gentleman whom she had engaged as his successor, and of the reform that would be worked in the heads and heels of her pupils, grown heavy and lumpish under the late instructor. The new master arrived ; and, whilst a boy who accompanied him was tuning his kit, and he himself paying his respects to the governess, I had no difficulty in discovering, under a common French name, my acquaintance the baron. The recognition was mutual. I shall never forget the start he gave when, in the middle of the first cotillon, he espied the little girl whom he had been used to see at the corner of the supper-table in Brunswick-square, every Saturday evening. He coloured with shame and anger, his hand trembled, and his voice faltered ; but as he would not know me, I had the discretion not to appear to know him, and said nothing of the affair till I again visited my kind cousin. I never saw any one more affected than she was on hearing my story. That this cold, proud, haughty man, to whom any thing that savored of humiliation seemed terrible, should so far abase his nobility for Angelique and independence, was wonderful ! She could not refrain from telling her husband, but the secret was carefully guarded from every one besides ; and, except that they showed him an involuntary increase of respect, and that I could not help drawing



myself up and sitting rather more upright than ordinary when he happened to look at me, nothing indicated any suspicion of the circumstance.

In the mean time the fair Angelique, who was treated with the customary disregard shown to unmarried beauties by her countrymen, (whose devoirs the old duchess, the crooked ambassadress, and the squinting countess, entirely engrossed,) was gradually making an English conquest of no small importance. The eldest son of a rich merchant, who had been connected with our host in several successful speculations, and was exceedingly intimate with the family, begged to be admitted to the Saturday-evening coterie. His request was readily granted; he came at first from curiosity, but that feeling was soon exchanged for a deeper and a more tender passion; and at last he ventured to disclose his love, first to the lady of his heart, and then to their mutual friend. Neither frowned on the intelligence, although both apprehended some difficulties. How would the baron look on a man who could hardly trace his ancestors farther back than his grandfather? And how again would these rich citizens, equally proud in a different way, relish an alliance with a man who, however highly descended, was neither more nor less than a dancing-master? But pride melts before love, like frost in the sunshine. All parties were good and kind, all obstacles were overcome, and all faults forgotten.

The rich merchant forgave the baron's poverty, and the baron (which was more difficult) forgave his wealth. The calling which had only been followed for Angelique's sake, was for her sake abandoned ; the fond father consented to reside with her ; and, surrounded by her lovely family, freed from poverty and its distressing consciousness, and from all the evils of false shame, he has long been one of the happiest, as he was always one of the best, of French emigrants.

## THE INQUISITIVE GENTLEMAN.

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ONE of the most remarkable instances that I know of that generally false theory “the ruling passion,” is my worthy friend Samuel Lynx, Esq., of Lynx Hall in this county—commonly called the Inquisitive Gentleman, Never was cognomen better bestowed. Curiosity is, indeed, the master-principle of his mind, the life-blood of his existence, the main-spring of every movement.

Mr. Lynx is an old bachelor of large fortune and ancient family ;—the Lynx's of Lynx Hall, have amused themselves with overlooking their neighbour's doings for many generations. He is tall, but loses something of his height by a constant habit of stooping ; he carries his head projecting before his body,—like one who has just proposed a question and is bending forward to receive an answer. A lady being asked, in his presence, what his features indicated, replied with equal truth and politeness—a most enquiring mind. The cock-up of the nose, which seems from the expansion and move-

ment of the nostrils to be snuffing up intelligence, as a hound does the air of a dewy morning, when the scent lies well ; the draw-down of the half-open mouth gaping for news ; the erected chin ; the wrinkled forehead ; the little eager sparkling eyes, half shut, yet full of curious meanings ; the strong red-eye-brows, protruded like a cat's whiskers or a snail's horns, *feelers*, which actually seem sentient ; every line and lineament of that remarkable physiognomy betrays a craving for information. He is exceedingly short-sighted ; and that defect also, although, on the first blush of the business, it might seem a disadvantage, conduces materially to the great purpose of his existence—the knowledge of other people's affairs. Sheltered by that infirmity, our “curious impertinent” can stare at things and persons through his glasses, in a manner which even he would hardly venture with bare eyes. He can peep and pry and feel and handle with an effrontery, never equalled by an unsuspected man. He can ask the name and parentage of every body in company, toss over every book, examine every note and card, pull the flowers from the vases, take the pictures from the walls, the embroidery from your work-box, and the shawl off your back ; and all with the most provoking composure, and just as if he was doing the right thing.

The propensity seems to have been born with him. He pants after secrets, just as magpies thieve, and mon-

keys break china, by instinct. His nurse reports of him that he came peeping into the world; that his very cries were interrogative, and his experiments in physics so many and so dangerous, that, before he was four years old, she was fain to tie his hands behind him, and to lock him into a dark closet to keep him out of harm's way, chiefly moved thereto by his ripping open his own bed, to see what it was made of, and throwing her best gown into the fire, to try if silk would burn. Then he was sent to school, a *preparatory* school, and very soon sent home again for incorrigible mischief. Then a private tutor undertook to instruct him on the interrogative system, which, in his case was obliged to be reversed, he asking the questions, and his tutor delivering the responses—a new cast of the didactic drama. Then he went to college; then sallied forth to ask his way over Europe; then came back to fix on his paternal estate of Lynx Hall, where, except occasional short absences, he hath sojourned ever since, signalizing himself at every stage of existence, from childhood to youth, from youth to manhood, from manhood to age, by the most lively and persevering curiosity, and by no other quality under heaven.

If he had not been so entirely devoid of ambition, I think that he might have attained to eminence in some smaller science, and have given and received a name from a new moss, or an undiscovered butterfly. His

keenness and sagacity would also have told well in antiquarian researches, particularly in any of the standing riddles of history; the Gowrie conspiracy, for instance, or the guilt of queen Mary, respecting which men may enquire and puzzle themselves from the first of January to the last of December without coming at all nearer to the solution. But he has no great pleasure in literature of any sort. Even the real parentage of the Waverley novels, although nothing in the shape of a question comes amiss to him, did not interest him quite so much as might be expected; perhaps because it was so generally interesting. He prefers the "Byeways to the Highways" of literature. The secrets of which every one talks, are hardly, in his mind, "Secrets worth knowing."

Besides, mere quiet guessing is not active enough for his stirring and searching faculty. He delights in the difficult, the inaccessible, the hidden, the obscure. A forbidden place is his paradise; a board announcing "steel-traps and spring guns" will draw him over a wall twelve feet high; he would undoubtedly have entered Blue-beard's closet, although certain to share the fate of his wives; and has had serious thoughts of visiting Constantinople, just to indulge his taste by stealing a glimpse of the secluded beauties of the seraglio—an adventure which would probably have had no very fortunate termination. Indeed our modern peeping Tom has encountered several mishaps at home in the course of

his long search after knowledge ; and has generally had the very great aggravation of being altogether unpitied. Once, as he was taking a morning ride, in trying to look over a wall a little higher than his head, he raised himself in the saddle, and the sagacious quadruped, his gray poney, an animal of a most accommodating and congenial spirit, having been, for that day, discarded in favour of a younger, gayer, less inquisitive and less patient steed, the new beast sprang on and left him sprawling. Once when, in imitation of Ranger, he had perched himself on the topmost round of a ladder, which he found placed beneath a window in Upper Berkeley-street, he lost his balance, and was pitched suddenly in through the sash, to the unspeakable consternation of a house-maid, who was rubbing the panes within side. Once he was tossed into an open carriage, full of ladies, as he stood up to look at them from the box of a stage-coach. And once he got a grievous knock from a chimney sweeper, as he poked his head into the chimney to watch his operations. He has been blown up by a rocket ; carried away in the strings of a balloon ; all but drowned in a diving-bell ; lost a finger in a mashing-mill ; and broken a great toe by drawing a lead pincushion off a work table. N. B. This last-mentioned exploit spoilt my worthy old friend, Miss Sewaway, a beautiful piece of fine netting, "worth," as she pathetically remarked, "a thousand toes."

These are only a few of the bodily mischiefs that have befallen poor Mr. Lynx. The moral scrapes, into which his unlucky propensity has brought him, are past all count. In his youth, although so little amorous that, I have reason to think, the formidable interrogatory which is emphatically called "popping the question" is actually the only question which he has never popped;—in his youth, he was very nearly drawn into wedlock by the sedulous attention which he paid to a young lady, whom he suspected of carrying on a clandestine correspondence. The mother scolded; the father stormed; the brother talked of satisfaction; and poor Mr. Lynx, who is as pacific as a quaker, must certainly have been married, had not the fair nymph eloped to Gretna Green, the day before that appointed for the nuptials. So he got off for the fright. He hath undergone at least twenty challenges for different sorts of impertinences; hath had his ears boxed and his nose pulled; hath been knocked down and horsewhipped; all which casualties he bears with an exemplary patience. He hath been mistaken for a thief, a bailiff, and a spy, abroad and at home; and once, on the Sussex coast, was so inquisitive respecting the moon, and the tide, and the free trade, that he was taken at one and the same time, by the different parties, for a smuggler and a revenue officer, and narrowly escaped being shot in the one capacity, and hanged in the other.



The evils which he inflicts bear a tolerably fair proportion to those which he endures. He is simply the most disagreeable man that lives. There is a curious infelicity about him which carries him straight to the wrong point. If there be such a thing as a sore subject, he is sure to press on it, to question a parvenu on his pedigree, a condemned author on his tragedy, and an old maid on her age. Besides these iniquities, his want of sympathy is so open and undisguised, that the most loquacious egotist loses the pleasure of talking of himself, in the evident absence of all feeling or interest on the part of the hearer. His conversation is always more like a judicial examination than any species of social intercourse, and often like the worst sort of examination—cross-questioning. He demands, like a secretary to the inquisition, and you answer (for you must answer) like a prisoner on the rack. Then the man is so mischievous! He rattles old china, marches over flower-beds, and paws Irling's lace. The people at museums and exhibitions dread the sight of him. He cannot keep his hands from moths and humming-birds; and once poked up a rattle-snake to discover whether the joints of the tail did actually produce the sound from which it derives its name; by which attack that pugnacious reptile was excited to such wrath that two ladies fell into hysterics. He nearly demolished the Invisible Girl by too rough an enquiry into her existence, and got

turned out of the automaton chess-player's territories, in consequence of an assault which he committed on that ingenious piece of mechanism. To do Mr. Lynx justice, I must admit that he sometimes does a little good to all this harm. He has, by design or accident, in the ordinary exercise of his vocation, hindered two or three duels, prevented a good deal of poaching and pilfering, and even saved his own house, and the houses of his neighbours from divers burglaries; his vigilance being, at least, as useful, in that way, as a watchman or an alarm-bell.

He makes but small use of his intelligence, however come by, which is perhaps occasioned by a distinctive difference of sex. A woman only half as curious would be prodigal of information—a spendthrift of news. Mr. Lynx hoards his, like a miser. Possession is his idol. If I knew any thing which I particularly wished the world not to know, I should certainly tell it to him at once. A secret, with him, is as safe as money in the Bank; the only peril lies in the ardour of his pursuit. One reason for his great discretion seems to me to be his total incapacity of speech—in any other than the interrogative mood. His very tone is set to that key, I doubt if he can drop his voice at the end of a sentence, or knows the meaning of a full stop. Who? What? When? Where? How? are his catchwords; and Eh? his only interjection. Children and poor peo-

ple, and all awkward persons who like to be talked to, and to talk again,—but do not very well understand how to set about it, delight in Mr. Lynx's notice. His catechetical mode of conversation enchants them, especially as he is of a liberal turn, and has generally some loose silver in his pocket, to bestow on a good answerer. To be sure the rapidity of his questions sometimes a little incommodes our country dames; who when fairly set in to a narrative of grievances do not care to be interrupted, but the honour of telling their histories and the histories of all their neighbours to a gentleman, makes ample amends for this little alloy. They are the only class who can endure his society, and he returns the compliment by shewing a very decided preference for theirs. The obscure has a remarkable charm for him. To enjoy it in perfection, he will often repair to some great manufacturing town where he is wholly unknown, and deposite himself in some suburban lodging in a new-built row, with poplars before the door, when, inviting his landlady to make tea for him, he gains, by aid of that genial beverage, an insight into all the loves and hatreds, “kitchen cabals and nursery mishaps,” in a word all the scandal of the town. Then he is happy.

Travelling is much to his taste; as are also Stage Coaches, and Steam Packets, and Diligences, and generally all places where people meet and talk, especially

an Inn, which is capital questioning ground, and safer than most other. There is a licence, a liberty, a freedom in the very name, and besides people do not stay long enough to be affronted. He spends a good deal of his time in these privileged abodes, and is well known as the Inquisitive Gentleman, on most of the great roads, although his seat of Lynx Hall is undoubtedly his principal residence. It is most commodiously situated, on a fine eminence over-looking three counties ; and he spends most of his time in a sort of observatory, which he has built on a rising ground, at the edge of the park, where he has mounted a telescope, by means of which he not only commands all the lanes and by-paths in the neighbourhood, but is enabled to keep a good look out, on the great northern road, two miles off, to oversee the stage coaches, and keep an eye on the mail. The manor lies in two parishes—another stroke of good fortune!—since the gossiping of both villages seems to belong to him of territorial right. Vestries, work-houses, schools, all are legitimate ground of inquiry. Besides his long and intimate acquaintance with the neighbourhood is an inestimable advantage, to a man of his turn of mind, and supplies, by detail and minuteness, what might be wanting in variety and novelty. He knows every man, woman and child, horse, cow, pig and dog, within half a dozen miles, and has a royal faculty of not forgetting, so that he has always plenty of matter for

questions, and most of the people being his tenants, answers come quickly. He used—

As I live, here he is ! just alighting from the gray poney, asking old Dame Wheeler, what makes her lame on one side, and little Jemmy White, why his jacket is ragged on the other—bawling to both—Dame Wheeler is deaf, and Jemmy stupid ; and she is answering at cross purposes, and he staring with his mouth open, and not answering at all, and Mr. Lynx is pouring question on question as ~~fast as~~ rain drops in a thunder-shower.—Well I must put away my desk, and my papers, especially *this*, for I should not quite like him to have the first benefit of the true and faithful likeness, which I have been sketching ;—I must put it away ; folding and sealing will hardly do, for though I don't think—I can scarcely imagine, that he would actually break open a sealed packet,—yet man is frail ! I have a regard for my old friend, and will not put him in the way of temptation.

## WALKS IN THE COUNTRY.

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### THE OLD HOUSE AT ABERLEIGH.

JUNE 25th.—What a glowing, glorious day! Summer in its richest prime, noon in its most sparkling brightness, little white clouds dappling the deep blue sky, and the sun, now partially veiled, and now bursting through them with an intensity of light! It would not do to walk to-day, professedly to walk,—we should be frightened at the very sound; and yet it is probable that we may be beguiled into a pretty long stroll before we return home. We are going to drive to the old house at Aberleigh, to spend the morning under the shade of those balmy firs, and amongst those luxuriant rose trees, and by the side of that brimming Loddon river. “Do not expect us before six o’clock,” said I, as I left the house; “Six at soonest!” added my charming companion; and off we drove in our little pony chaise drawn by our old mare, and with the good humoured

urchin, Henry's successor, a sort of younger Scrub, who takes care of horse and chaise, and cow and garden, for our charioteer.

My comrade in this homely equipage was a young lady of high family and higher endowments, to whom the novelty of the thing, and her own naturalness of character and simplicity of taste gave an unspeakable enjoyment. She danced the little chaise up and down as she got into it, and laughed for very glee like a child. Lizzy herself could not have been more delighted. She praised the horse and the driver, and the roads and the scenery, and gave herself fully up to the enchantment of a rural excursion in the sweetest weather of this sweet season. I enjoyed all this too; for the road was pleasant to every sense, winding through narrow lanes, under high elms, and between hedges garlanded with woodbine and rose trees, whilst the air was scented with the delicious fragrance of blossomed beans. I enjoyed it all,—but, I believe, my principal pleasure was derived from my companion herself.

Emily I. is a person whom it is a privilege to know. She is quite like a creation of the older poets, and might pass for one of Shakspeare's or Fletcher's women stepped into life, just as tender, as playful, as gentle, and as kind. She is clever too, and has all the knowledge and accomplishments that a carefully-conducted education, acting on a mind of singular clearness and

ductility, matured and improved by the very best company, can bestow. But one never thinks of her acquirements. It is the charming artless character, the bewitching sweetness of manner, the real and universal sympathy, the quick taste and the ardent feeling, that one loves in Emily. She is Irish by birth, and has in perfection the melting voice and soft caressing accent by which her fair countrywomen are distinguished. Moreover she is pretty—I think her beautiful, and so do all who have heard as well as seen her,—but pretty, very pretty, all the world must confess; and perhaps that is a distinction more enviable, because less envied, than the “palmy state” of beauty. Her prettiness is of the prettiest kind,—that of which the chief character is youthfulness. A short but pleasing figure, all grace and symmetry, a fair blooming face, beaming with intelligence and good humour; the prettiest little feet and the whitest hands in the world;—such is Emily I.

She resides with her maternal grandmother, a venerable old lady, slightly shaken with the palsy; and when together, (and they are so fondly attached to each other that they are seldom parted) it is one of the loveliest combinations of youth and age ever witnessed. There is no seeing them without feeling an increase of respect and affection for both grandmother and granddaughter—always one of the tenderest and most beautiful of natural connexions—as Richardson knew when



he made such exquisite use of it in his matchless book. I fancy that grandmama Shirley must have been just such another venerable lady as Mrs. S., and our sweet Emily—Oh, no! Harriet Byron is not half good enough for her! There is nothing like her in the whole seven volumes.

But here we are at the bridge! Here we must alight! "This is the Loddon, Emily. Is it not a beautiful river? rising level with its banks, so clear and smooth and peaceful, giving back the verdant landscape and the bright blue sky, and bearing on its pellucid stream the snowy water-lily, the purest of flowers, which sits enthroned on its own cool leaves looking chastity itself, like the lady in Comus. That queenly flower becomes the water, and so do the stately swans who are sailing so majestically down the stream, like those who

"On St. Mary's lake  
Float double, swan and shadow."

We must dismount here, and leave Richard to take care of our equipage under the shade of these trees, whilst we walk up to the house:—See there it is! We must cross this stile; there is no other way now."

And crossing the stile we were immediately in what had been a drive round a spacious park, and still retained something of the character, though the park itself had long been broken into arable fields,—and in

full view of the Great House, a beautiful structure of James the first's time, whose glassless windows and dilapidated doors, form a melancholy contrast with the strength and entireness of the rich and massive front.

The story of that ruin—for such it is—is always to me singularly affecting : It is that of the decay of an ancient and distinguished family gradually reduced from the highest wealth and station to actual poverty. The house and park and a small estate around it were entailed on a distant cousin, and could not be alienated ; and the late owner, the last of his name and lineage, after long struggling with debt and difficulty, farming his own lands, and clinging to his magnificent home with a love of place almost as tenacious as that of the younger Foscari, was at last forced to abandon it, retired to a paltry lodging in a paltry town, and died there about twenty years ago, broken hearted. His successor, bound by no ties of association to the spot, and rightly judging the residence to be much too large for the diminished estate, immediately sold the superb fixtures, and would have entirely taken down the house, if on making the attempt the masonry had not been found so solid that the materials were not worth the labour. A great part, however, of one side is laid open, and the splendid chambers with their carving and gilding, are exposed to the wind and rain—sad memorials of past grandeur ! The grounds have been left in a

merciful neglect ; the park, indeed, is broken up, the lawn mown twice a year like a common hay-field, the grotto mouldering into ruin, and the fish-ponds choked with rushes and aquatic plants ; but the shrubs and flowering trees are undestroyed, and have grown into a magnificence of size and wildness of beauty, such as we may imagine them to attain in their native forests. Nothing can exceed their luxuriance, especially in the spring when the lilac and laburnam and double cherry put forth their gorgeous blossoms. There is a sweet sadness in the sight of such floweriness amidst such desolation ; it seems the triumph of nature over the destructive power of man. The whole place, in that season more particularly, is full of a soft and soothing melancholy, reminding me, I scarcely know why, of some of the descriptions of natural scenery in the novels of Charlotte Smith, which I read when a girl, and which, perhaps, for that reason hang on my memory.

But here we are, in the smooth grassy ride, on the top of a steep turfy slope descending to the river, crowned with enormous firs and limes of equal growth, looking across the winding waters into a sweet peaceful landscape of quiet meadows, shut in by distant woods. What a fragrance is in the air from the balmy fir trees and the blossomed limes ! What an intensity of odour ! And what a murmur of bees in the lime-trees ! What a coil those little winged people make

over our heads! And what a pleasant sound it is!—the pleasantest of busy sounds, that which comes associated with all that is good and beautiful—industry and forecast, and sunshine and flowers. Surely these lime-trees might store a hundred hives; the very odour is of a honied richness, cloying, satiating.

Emily exclaimed in admiration as we stood under the deep, strong, leafy shadow, and still more when honey-suckles trailed their untrimmed profusion in our path, and roses, really trees, almost intercepted our passage.

“On Emily! farther yet! Force your way by that jessamine—it will yield; I will take care of this stubborn white rose bough.”—“Take care of yourself! Pray take care,” said my fairest friend; “let me hold back the branches.”—After we had won our way through the strait, at some expense of veils and flounces, she stopt to contemplate and admire the tall graceful shrub, whose long thorny stems spreading in every direction had opposed our progress, and now waved their delicate clusters over our heads. “Did I ever think,” exclaimed she, “of standing under the shadow of a white rose tree! What an exquisite fragrance! And what a beautiful flower! so pale, and white, and tender, and the petals thin and smooth as silk! What rose is it?”—“Don’t you know? Did you never see it before? It is rare now, I believe, and seems rarer than it is, because it only blossoms in very hot summers; but this, Emily,

is the musk rose,—that very musk rose of which Titania talks, and which is worthy of Shakspeare and of her. Is it not?—No! do not smell to it; it is less sweet so than other roses: but one cluster in a vase, or even that bunch in your bosom will perfume a large room, as it does this summer air.”—“ Oh! we will take twenty clusters,” said Emily:—“ I wish Grandmama were here! She talks so often of a musk rose tree that grew against one end of her father’s house. I wish she were here to see this!”

Echoing her wish, and well laden with musk roses, planted perhaps in the days of Shakspeare, we reached the steps that led to a square summer-house or banqueting-room, overhanging the river: the under part was a boat-house, whose projecting roof, as well as the walls and the very top of the little tower, was covered with ivy and woodbine, and surmounted by tufted barberries, bird cherries, acacias, covered with their snowy chains, and other pendent and flowering trees. Beyond rose two poplars of unrivalled magnitude, towering like stately columns over the dark tall firs, and giving a sort of pillared and architectural grandeur to the scene.

We were now close to the mansion; but it looked sad and desolate, and the entrance, choked with brambles and nettles, seemed almost to repel our steps. The summer-house, the beautiful summer-house was free and open and inviting, commanding from the unglazed win-

dows, which hung high above the water, a reach of the river terminated by a rustic mill.

There we sate, emptying our little basket of fruit and country cates, till Emily was seized with a desire of viewing, from the other side of the Loddon, the scenery which had so much enchanted her. "I must," said she, "take a sketch of the ivied boat-house, and of this sweet room, and this pleasant window ;—Grandmama would never be able to walk from the road to see the place itself, but she must see its likeness." So forth we sallied, not forgetting the dear musk roses.

We had no way of reaching the desired spot but by retracing our steps a mile, during the heat of the hottest hour of the day, and then following the course of the river to an equal distance on the other side; nor had we any materials for sketching, except the crumpled paper which had contained our repast, and a pencil without a point which I happened to have about me. But these small difficulties are pleasures to gay and happy youth. Regardless of such obstacles, the sweet Emily bounded on like a fawn, and I followed delighting in her delight. The sun went in, and the walk was delicious; a reviving coolness seemed to breathe over the water, wafting the balmy scent of the firs and limes; we found a point of view presenting the boat-house, the water, the poplars, and the mill, in a most felicitous combination; the little straw fruit-basket made a capital

table ; and refreshed and sharpened and pointed by our trusty lacquey's excellent knife (your country boy is never without a good knife, it is his prime treasure,) the pencil did double duty ;—first in the skilful hands of Emily, whose faithful and spirited sketch does equal honour to the scene and to the artist, and then in the humbler office of attempting a faint transcript of my own impressions in the following sonnet :—

It was an hour of calmest noon, a day  
 Of ripest summer : o'er the deep blue sky  
 White speckled clouds came sailing peacefully,  
 Half-shrouding in a checquer'd veil the ray  
 Of the sun, too ardent else,—what time we lay  
 By the smooth Loddon, opposite the high  
 Steep bank, which as a coronet gloriously  
 Wore its rich crest of firs and lime-trees, gay  
 With their pale tassels ; while from out a bower  
 Of ivy (where those column'd poplars rear  
 Their heads) the ruin'd boat-house, like a tower,  
 Flung its deep shadow on the waters clear.  
 My Emily ! forget not that calm hour,  
 Nor that fair scene, by thee made doubly dear !

## EARLY RECOLLECTIONS.

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### MY GODFATHER.

It is now nearly twenty years ago, that I, a young girl just freed from the trammels of schooldom, went into a remote and distant county, on a visit to my godfather, to make acquaintance with a large colony of my relations, and behold new scenes and new faces; a pleasure, certainly; but a formidable and awful pleasure, to a shy and home-loving girl. Nothing could have reconciled me to the prospect of encountering so many strange cousins, for they were all strangers, but my strong desire to see my dear and venerable god-papa, for whom, although we had never met since the christening, I entertained the most lively affection,—an affection nourished on his part by kindnesses of every sort, from the huge wax-doll, and the letter in print-hand, proper to the damsel of six years old, down to the pretty verses and elegant necklace, his birth-day greeting to the young



lady of sixteen. He was no stranger, that dear god-papa! I was quite sure I should know him at first sight, quite sure that I should love him better than ever; both which predictions were verified to the letter. It would have been strange indeed if they had not.

Mr. Evelyn, for so I shall call him, was a gentleman of an ancient family and considerable fortune, residing in a small town in the north of England; where he had occupied for the last fifty years, the best house, and the highest station, the object of universal respect and affection, from high and low. He was that beautiful thing, a healthy and happy old man. Shakspeare, the master painter, has partly described him for me, in the words of old Adam,—

“ Therefore my age is as a lusty winter  
Frosty but kindly.”

Never was wintry day, with the sun smiling upon the icicles, so bright or so keen. At eighty-four, he had an unbent, vigorous person, a fresh colour, long, curling, milk-white hair, and regular features, lighted up by eyes as brilliant and as piercing as those of a hawk; his foot was as light, his voice as clear, and his speech as joyous as at twenty. He had a life of mind, an alertness of spirit, a brilliant and unfading hilarity, which were to him, like the quick blood of youth. Time had been rather his friend than his foe; had stolen nothing as far

as I could discover ; and had given such a licence to his jokes and his humour, that he was when I knew him as privileged a person as a court-jester in days of yore. Perhaps he was always so ; for, independently of fortune and station, high animal spirits, invincible good humour, and a certain bustling officiousness, are pretty sure to make their way in the world, especially when they seek only for petty distinctions. He was always the first personage of his small circle ; president of half the clubs in the neighbourhood ; steward to the races ; chairman of the bench ; father of the corporation ; and would undoubtedly have been member for the town, if that ancient borough had not had the ill luck to be disfranchised in some stormy period of our national history.

But that was no great loss to my dear godfather. Even the bench and the vestry, although he presided at them with sufficient reputation, were too grave matters to suit his taste. He would have made a bad police magistrate ; his sympathies ran directly the contrary way. Accordingly he used to be accused of certain merciful abuses of his office of justice of the peace ; such as winking at vagrants and vagabonds, encouraging the Merry Andrew, and the droll fellow Punch, and feeing the constable, *not* to take up a certain drunken fiddler, who had haunted the town, man and boy, these forty years.

Races and balls were more his element. There he would walk about with his hands behind him, and a pleasant word for every one; his keen eye sparkling with gaiety, and his chuckling laugh heard above all, the unwearied patron and promoter of festivity in all its branches; rather than the dance should languish, he would stand up himself. This indulgence to the young, or rather this sympathy with enjoyment wherever he found it, was not confined to the rich; he liked a fair or a revel quite as well as an assembly, perhaps better, because the merriment there was noisier, heartier, more completely free from restraint. How he would chuck the rosy country lasses under the chin, and question them about their sweethearts! And how the little coquettes would smile, and blush, and curtsy, and cry "fie" and enjoy it! That was certainly an octogenarian privilege and one worth a score or two of years, in his estimation.

But these diversions, thoroughly as he entered into their spirit, were by no means necessary to his individual amusement. His cheerfulness needed no external stimuli. The day was too short—life itself, although so prolonged, was too brief for his busy idleness. He had nothing to do, followed no calling, belonged to no profession, had no estate to improve, no children to establish, and yet from morning to night he was employed about some vagary or other, with as much ardour as if

the fate of the nation depended on his speed. Fishing and fiddling, shooting and coursing, turning and varnishing, making bird-cages and picture-frames, and cabbage-nets, and flies for angling, constructing charades, and tagging verses, were only a few of his occupations. Then he dallied with science, and flirted with art; was in a small way a connoisseur, had a tolerable collection of prints, and a very bad one of paintings, and was more-over a sort of virtuoso. I had not been two days in the house before my good godfather introduced me to his museum, a long room or rather gallery, where, as he boasted, and I well believe, neither mop, nor broom, nor housemaid had ever entered.

This museum was certainly the dirtiest den into which I ever set foot; dark, to a pitch, which took away for a while all power of distinguishing objects, and so dusty as to annihilate colour, and confuse form. I have a slight notion that this indistinctness was, in the present instance, rather favourable than otherwise to the collection, which I cannot help suspecting, was a thought less valuable than its owner opined. It consisted, I believe, (for one cannot be very sure,) of sundry birds in glass cases exceedingly ragged and dingy; of sundry stuffed beasts among which the moth had made great havoc; of sundry reptiles, and other curiosities, preserved, pickled—(what is the proper word?)—in glass bottles; of a great heap of ores, and shells, and spars,

covered with cobwebs ; of some copper coins, all rust ; of half a mummy ; and a bit of cloth made of Asbestos. The only time I ever got into a scrape with my good-humoured host was on the score of this last-mentioned treasure. Being assured by him that it was the veritable, undoubted Asbestos, which not only resists the action of fire, but is actually cleansed by that element, I proposed, seeing how very much it needed purification, that it should undergo a fiery ablution forthwith ; but that ordeal was rejected as too dangerous ; and I myself certainly considered for five minutes as dangerous too—something of an incendiary, a female Guy Vaux—I was lucky enough to do away the impression by admiring, very honestly, some newly-caught butterflies,—pretty insects, and not yet spoiled,—which occupied one side of a long table. They were backed to my great consternation by a row of skulls, which, Mr. Evelyn having lately met with Dr. Gall's book, and being much smitten with Cranio—I beg its new name's pardon—Phrenology—had purchased at five shillings a head, of the sexton, and now descanted on in a vein as unlike Hamlet's as possible.

The museum was hung round with festoons of bird's eggs, strung necklace-fashion, as boys are wont to thread them, being the part of its contents, which, next perhaps to his new playthings the skulls, its owner valued most. Indeed they had an additional charm in his eyes, by

being mostly the trophies of his own exploits from childhood downwards. Bird-nesting, always his favourite sport, had been, since he had dabbled in natural history, invested with the dignity of a pursuit. He loved it as well as any child in the parish; had as keen an eye to his game, and as much intrepidity in its acquisition; climbed trees, delved into hedgerows, and no more minded a rent garment, or a tumble into a ditch than an urchin of eight years old. The butterflies too, were, for the most part, of his own catching. I have myself seen a chase after a moth, that might serve as a companion to that grand Peter-Pindaric, "Sir Joseph Banks and the emperor of Morocco," but my godfather had the better of the sport, he knocked down *his* insect.

To return to our museum. The last article that I remember, was a prodigious bundle of autographs, particularly unselect; where Thomas Smith, date unknown, figured by the side of Oliver Cromwell, and John Brown, equally incognito, had the honour of being tied up with Queen Elizabeth. I would not be very certain either that there might not be an occasional forgery among the greater names; not on the part of the possessor, he would as soon have thought of forging a bank bill, but on that of the several venders, or donors, which last class generally came, autograph in hand, to beg a favour. Never was any human being so

complete a subject for imposition—so entirely devoid of guile himself, so utterly unsuspecting of its existence in others. He lived as if there were not a lie in the world;—blessed result of a frank and ardent temperament, and of a memory so happily constituted that it retained no more trace of past evil, than of last year's clouds.

His living collection was quite as large, and almost as out of the way, as his dead one. He was an eminent bird-fancier, and had all sorts of "smale foule's" as old Chaucer calls them, in every variety of combination, and in different stages of education; for your professed bird-fancier, like your professed florist, is seldom content to let nature alone. Starlings, jays, and magpies, learning to talk; bulfinches and goldfinches learning tunes from a barrel organ; linnets brought up under a wood-lark, unlearning their own notes and studying his; nightingales, some of the earliest known in those parts, learning to live north of Trent; all sorts of canaries, and mule birds, and nests full of young things not yet distinguishable from each other, made up the miscellaneous contents of his aviary. He had also some white mice, a tame squirrel, and a very sagacious hedge-hog; and he had had a tortoise, which by an extraordinary exertion of ingenuity, he had contrived to kill,—a feat, which a road waggon going over the poor animal, would have failed to perform. This was the

manner. The tortoise, as most people know, is for about six months in the year torpid, and generally retires under ground to enjoy his half year's nap: he had been missing some days, when the old gardener dug him up out of a cabbage bed, and brought him in for dead. My Godfather, forgetting his protégé's habits, and just fresh from reading some book on the efficacy of the warm bath, (he was a great man for specifics) soused the unlucky land-crab into hot water, and killed him outright. All that could be done to repair the mischief was tried, and he was finally replaced in his old burrow, the cabbage bed, but even burying him failed to bring him to life again. This misadventure rather damped Mr. Evelyn's zest for outlandish favourites. After all, his real and abiding pets were children—children of all ages, from six months old to twelve years. He had much of the child in his own composition; his sweet and simple nature, his restlessness and merri-ment, harmonized with theirs most completely. He loved a game at romps too, as well as they did, and would join in all their sports from battledore and shuttlecock, to puss in the corner. He had no child of his own—(have I not said that he was married?)—no child whom he had an absolute right to spoil; but he made all the children of the place serve his turn, and right happy were they to be spoiled by Mr. Evelyn.

They all flocked around him, guided by that re-



markable instinct, by which the veriest baby can detect a person who really loves it; ran after him when he rode on horseback, thrust their little hands into his when he walked, and hung round the stone porch in which he had the habit of sitting on a summer afternoon, reading the newspaper in the sun, and chatting to the passers by, (for he knew every soul in the place gentle or simple) holding a long dialogue with one, sending a jest after another, and a kind nod to the third. Thither his clients, the children, would resort every evening, as much, I verily believe, for love of their patron as for the gingerbread, apples, and half-pence,—the tops, marbles, and balls, which used to issue from those capacious magazines, his pockets.

The house, to which this porch belonged, was well suited to the tastes and station of its owner;—stately, old-fashioned, and spacious; situate in the principal street, and commanding the market-place,—a mansion in a town. Behind was a formal garden in the Dutch style,—terraces, and beds of flowers, and tall yew hedges, and holly and box cut into various puzzling shapes, dragons, peacocks, lions, and swans. Within doors all was equally precise and out of date, being (except the museum) under the special and exclusive dominion of the lady of the house.

Mrs. Evelyn formed just the contrast with her husband which is said to tell best in matrimony. She was

nearly twenty years younger in actual age, but seemed twenty years older from the mere absence of his vivacity. In all essential points they agreed perfectly; were equally charitable, generous, hospitable, and just; but of their minor differences there was no end. She was grave, and slow, and formal—upright, thin, and pale; dressed with a sort of sober splendour; wore a great quantity of old-fashioned jewellery; went airing every day; and got up, breakfasted, dined, supped, and went to bed at exactly the same minute, the whole year round,—clock work was never more regular. Then she was addicted to a fussing and fidgetty neatness, such as is held proper to old maids and Dutch women, and kept the house afloat with perpetual scourings. Moreover she had a hatred of motion and idleness, and pursued as a duty some long tiresome useless piece of handy work. Knitting a carpet, for instance, or netting a veil, or constructing that hideous piece of female joinery, a patch-work counterpane. The room in which I slept bore notable testimony to her industry; the whole fringe of the bed and window-curtains being composed of her knotting, and the hearth-rug of her work, as well as a chair, miscalled easy, stuffed into a hardness bumping against you in every direction, and covered with huge flowers, in small tent stitch, flowers that would have done honour to the gardens of Brobdignag. Besides this she was a genealogist, and used

to bewilder herself and her hearers in a labyrinth of pedigree, which even at this distance of time, it gives me a head-ache to think of; nay, she was so unmerciful as to expect that I should understand and recollect all the intricacies of my own descent, and how I came to be of kin to the innumerable cousins to whom she introduced me,—I could as soon have learnt that despair of my childhood, the multiplication table.

All this might seem to compose no very desirable companion for an idle girl of sixteen; but I had not been a week in the house before I loved her very nearly as well as my dear godfather, although in a different way. Her thorough goodness made itself felt; and she was so perfectly a gentlewoman, so constantly considerate and kind, so liberal and charitable, in deed and word, that nobody could help loving Mrs. Evelyn. Besides, we had one taste in common, a fondness for her peculiar territory, the orchard, a large grassy spot covered with fine old fruit trees, divided from the flower garden on the north by a magnificent yew hedge, bounded on one side by a filbert walk, on the other by the high ivied stone wall of the potagerie, and sloping down on the south to a broad sparkling rivulet, which went dancing along like a thing of life, (as your northern rivulet is apt to do) forming a thousand tiny bays and promontories, and letting in a prospect of matchless beauty. Fancy a winding woodland valley, a rural bridge, a

village, with its gothic church, and a steep acclivity crowned with the ruins of a venerable castle, thrown together with a felicity of form and colouring, which might beseem a landscape-painter's dream, and you will have a faint idea of the view from that orchard. Under the yew hedge, on a sunny bank thickly set with roses and honeysuckles, and flowers and sweet herbs, were Mrs. Evelyn's pets, her only pets, the bees. She was so fond of them, and visited them so often, that I used to wonder that she allowed them to be taken; but her love of bees was balanced by her extraordinary predilection for honey: honey, especially when eaten in the comb, was, in her mind, a specific for all diseases, an universal panacæa, the true elixir vitæ. She imputed her own good health, entirely to this salutary regimen; and was sure to trace every illness she heard of, to some neglect of honey-eating. That she never could prevail on her husband to taste this natural balsam (as she was wont to call it) must have been the great evil of her matrimonial life. Every morning did she predict death or disease to the sturdy recusant; and every morning was she answered by the same keen glance of the laughing hazel eye, and the same arch nod of defiance. There he sat, a living witness that man might thrive without honey. It was really too provoking.

Another point in dispute between them arose out of Mr. Evelyn's extraordinary addiction to match-making.

He always insisted on calling marriage a happy ceremony, although one should think he had attended weddings enough to know that a funeral is generally lively in the comparison ; and I am persuaded that dear as he held his genuine asbestos, a piece of bride-cake, drawn nine times through the ring, would for the time being have been held the greater treasure. Accordingly he was the general confidant of all courtships of gentility within ten miles, and even, with all deference be it spoken, of some wooings which had no gentility to boast ; for his taste being known, and his abilities in that line duly appreciated, half the youths in the town came bowing to his honour to beg his good word. To his honour's good word and his own goodly person did John Bell, head waiter of the Greyhound, owe the felicity of calling the buxom widow Wilson, the rich landlady of that well-accustomed inn, Mrs. Bell. To his honour's good word, and a threatened loss of custom, was Robert Heron, the smart young linen-draper, indebted for the fair hand of Margaret Car, sole heiress of Archy Car, Scotchman, and barber, between whom and old Robert Heron a Capulet and Montagu feud, originating in a quarrel about their respective countries, had subsisted for a dozen years. Nothing short of my godfather's threatening to learn to shave could have brought that Romeo and Juliet together. His honour related these exploits with great complacency, whilst his wife did not fail to remind

him of the less fortunate exertions of his talent. How his influence gained poor Will the blacksmith his shrew, or Jem the gardener his daudle. But such accidents will befall the ablest diplomatists. The grand object of his schemes at present was an union between two individuals of his own household. Mrs. Evelyn's personal attendant was a stiff perpendicular old maid, bony and meagre in her person, with red hair, and something of a vinegar aspect,—for the rest a well-intentioned woman, and a valuable servant. Mr. Evelyn had been looking out for a sweetheart for this amiable damsel, (Mrs. Embleton by name) for the last ten years, and had begun to despair of success, when all at once it occurred to him to strike up a match between her and his fat coachman, Samuel—a round jolly old bachelor, blunt and bluff, with a broad red face, a knowing grin, and a most magnificent coachmanlike wig. He began in due form by rallying Mrs. Embleton on her conquest. Mrs. Embleton minced and simpered,—no objection in that quarter! Then he consulted Mrs. Evelyn,—Mrs. Evelyn remonstrated; that however he knew by experience, might be overcome. Then he laughed at Samuel,—Samuel whistled;—that was rather dismaying. The next day he returned to the charge—and again Samuel whistled,—worse and worse!—A third time his master attacked him, and a third time did Samuel whistle;—And any body but my godfather would have despaired.

He however did not. At this point stood the game, when I left the north ; and the very first letter I received from Mrs. Evelyn told me, that the marriage was settled, the wedding-day fixed, and the bride-cake purchased. And the next, brought tidings, (for I still had my doubts of Samuel) that the ceremony was actually performed, and the happy knot tied ; and Mrs. Evelyn seemed pacified, and the bridegroom resigned. No withstanding my dear godfather !

## THE OLD GIPSY.

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WE have few gipsies in our neighbourhood. In spite of our tempting green lanes, our woody dells and heathy commons, the rogues don't take to us. I am afraid that we are too civilized, too cautious; that our sheep-folds are too closely watched; our barn-yards too well guarded; our geese and ducks too fastly penned; our chickens too securely locked up; our little pigs too safe in their sty; our game too scarce; our laundresses too careful. In short, we are too little primitive: we have a snug brood of vagabonds and poachers of our own, to say nothing of their regular followers, constables and justices of the peace:—we have stocks in the village, and a treadmill in the next town; and therefore we go gipsyless—a misfortune of which every landscape painter, and every lover of that living landscape, the country, can appreciate the extent. There is nothing under the sun that harmonizes so well with nature, especially in her



woodland recesses, as that picturesque people, who are, so to say, the wild genus—the pheasants and roebucks of the human race.

Sometimes, indeed, we used to see a gipsy procession passing along the common, like an eastern caravan, men, women, and children, donkies and dogs; and sometimes a patch of bare earth, strewn with ashes and surrounded by scathed turf, on the broad green margin of some cross road, would give token of a gipsy halt; but a regular gipsy encampment has always been so rare an event, that I was equally surprised and delighted to meet with one in the course of my walks last autumn, particularly as the party was of the most innocent description, quite free from those tall, dark, lean, Spanish-looking men, who it must be confessed, with all my predilection for the caste, are rather startling to meet when alone in an unfrequented path; and a path more solitary than that into which the beauty of a bright October morning had tempted me could not well be imagined.

Branching off from the high road, a little below our village, runs a wide green lane, bordered on either side by a row of young oaks and beeches just within the hedge, forming an avenue, in which, on a summer afternoon, you may see the squirrels disporting from tree to tree, whilst the rooks, their fellow denizens, are wheeling in noisy circles over their heads. The fields sink gently down on each side, so that, being the bottom of a natu-

ral winding valley, and crossed by many little rills and rivulets, the turf exhibits even in the driest summers an emerald verdure. Scarcely any one passes the end of that lane, without wishing to turn into it ; but the way is in some sort dangerous and difficult for foot passengers, because the brooklets which intersect it are in many instances bridgeless, and in others bestridden by planks so decayed, that it were rashness to pass them ; and the nature of the ground, treacherous and boggy, and in many places as unstable as water, renders it for carriages wholly impracticable.

I however, who do not dislike a little difficulty where there is no absolute danger, and who am moreover almost as familiar with the one only safe track as the heifers who graze there, sometimes venture along this seldom-trodden path, which terminates, at the end of a mile and a half, in a spot of singular beauty. The hills become abrupt and woody, the cultivated enclosures cease, and the long narrow valley ends in a little green, bordered on one side by a fine old park, whose mossy paling, overhung with thorns and hollies, comes sweeping round it, to meet the rich coppices which clothe the opposite acclivity. Just under the high and irregular paling, shaded by the birches and sycamores of the park, and by the venerable oaks which are scattered irregularly on the green, is a dark deep pool, whose broken banks, crowned with fern and wreathed with briar and bramble, have an

air of wildness and grandeur that might have suited the pencil of Salvator Rosa.

In this lonely place (for the mansion to which the park belongs has long been uninhabited) I first saw our gipsies. They had pitched their little tent under one of the oak trees, perhaps from a certain dim sense of natural beauty, which those who live with nature in the fields are seldom totally without; perhaps because the neighbourhood of the coppices, and of the deserted hall, was favourable to the acquisition of game, and of the little fuel which their hardy habits required. The party consisted only of four—an old crone, in a tattered red cloak and black bonnet, who was stooping over a kettle, of which the contents were probably as savoury as that of Meg Merrilies, renowned in story; a pretty black-eyed girl, at work under the trees; a sun-burnt urchin of eight or nine, collecting sticks and dead leaves to feed their out-of-door fire, and a slender lad two or three years older, who lay basking in the sun, with a couple of shabby dogs of the sort called mongrel, in all the joy of idleness, whilst a grave patient donkey stood grazing hard-by. It was a pretty picture, with its soft autumnal sky, its rich woodiness, its sunshine, its verdure, the light smoke curling from the fire, and the group disposed around it so harmless, poor outcasts! and so happy—a beautiful picture! I stood gazing on it till I was half ashamed to look longer, and came away half

afraid that they should depart before I could see them again.

This fear I soon found to be groundless. The old gipsy was a celebrated fortune-teller, and the post having been so long vacant, she could not have brought her talents to a better market. The whole village rang with the predictions of this modern Cassandra—unlike her Trojan predecessor, inasmuch as her prophecies were never of evil. I myself could not help admiring the real cleverness, the genuine gipsy tact with which she adapted her foretellings to the age, the habits, and the known desires and circumstances of her clients.

To our little pet Lizzy, for instance, a damsel of seven, she predicted a fairing; to Ben Kirby, a youth of thirteen, head batter of the boys, a new cricket-ball; to Ben's sister Lucy, a girl some three years his senior, and just promoted to that ensign of womanhood a cap, she promised a pink top-knot; whilst for Miss Sophia Matthews, our old-maidish school-mistress, who would be heartily glad to be a girl again, she foresaw one handsome husband, and for the smart widow Simmons, two. These were the least of her triumphs. George Davis, the dashing young farmer of the hill-house, a gay sportsman, who scoffed at fortune-tellers and matrimony, consulted her as to whose greyhound would win the courser's cup at the beacon meeting; to which she replied, that she did not know to whom the dog would belong, but

that the winner of the cup would be a white greyhound, with one blue ear, and a spot on its side, being an exact description of Mr. George Davis's favourite Helen, who followed her master's steps like his shadow, and was standing behind him at this very instant. This prediction gained our gipsy half-a-crown; and master Welles—the thriving thrifty yeoman of the lea—she managed to win sixpence from his hard honest frugal hand, by a prophecy that his old brood mare, called Blackfoot, should bring forth twins; and Ned the blacksmith, who was known to court the tall nursemaid at the mill—she got a shilling from Ned, simply by assuring him that his wife should have the longest coffin that ever was made in our wheelwright's shop. A most tempting prediction! ingeniously combining the prospect of winning and of surviving the lady of his heart—a promise equally adapted to the hot and cold fits of that ague, called love; lightening the fetters of wedlock; uniting in a breath the bridegroom and the widower. Ned was the best pleased of all her customers, and enforced his suit with such vigour, that he and the fair giantess were asked in church the next Sunday, and married at the fortnight's end.

No wonder that all the world—that is to say, all our world—were crazy to have their fortunes told—to enjoy the pleasure of hearing from such undoubted authority, that what they wished to be should be. Amongst the

most eager to take a peep into futurity, was our pretty maid Harriet, although her desire took the not unusual form of disclamation,—“nothing should induce her to have her fortune told, nothing upon earth!” “She never thought of the gipsy, not she!” and to prove the fact, she said so at least twenty times a day. Now Harriet’s fortune seemed told already; her destiny was fixed. She, the belle of the village, was engaged, as every body knows, to our village beau, Joel Brent; they were only waiting for a little more money to marry; and as Joel was already head carter to our head farmer, and had some prospect of a bailiff’s place, their union did not appear very distant. But Harriet, besides being a beauty, was a coquette, and her affection for her betrothed did not interfere with certain flirtations which came in like Isabella, “by-the-bye,” and occasionally cast a shadow of coolness between the lovers, which, however, Joel’s cleverness and good humour generally contrived to chase away. There had probably been a little fracas in the present instance, for at the end of one of her daily professions of unfaith in gipsies and their predictions, she added, “that none but fools did believe them; that Joel had had his fortune told, and wanted to treat her to a prophecy—but she was not such a simpleton.”

About half an hour after the delivery of this speech, I happened, in tying up a chrysanthemum, to go to our

wood-yard for a stick of proper dimensions, and there, enclosed between the faggot-pile and the coal-shed, stood the gipsy, in the very act of palmistry, conning the lines of fate in Harriet's hand. Never was a stronger contrast than that between the old withered sybil, dark as an Egyptian, with bright laughing eyes, and an expression of keen humour under all her affected solemnity, and our village beauty, tall, and plump, and fair, blooming as a rose, and simple as a dove. She was listening too intently to see me, but the fortune-teller did, and stopped so suddenly, that her attention was awakened and the intruder discovered.

Harriet at first meditated a denial. She called up a pretty innocent unconcerned look ; answered my silence (for I never spoke a word) by muttering something about "coals for the parlour;" and catching up my new painted green watering-pot, instead of the coal-scuttle, began filling it with all her might, to the unspeakable discomfiture of that useful utensil, on which the dingy dust stuck like birdlime—and of her own clean apron, which exhibited a curious interchange of black and green on a white ground. During the process of filling the watering-pot, Harriet made divers signs to the gipsy to decamp. The old sybil, however, budged not a foot, influenced probably by two reasons : one, the hope of securing a customer in the new comer, whose appearance is generally, I am afraid, the very re-

verse of dignified, rather merry than wise ; the other, a genuine fear of passing through the yard-gate, on the outside of which a much more imposing person, my greyhound Mayflower, who has a sort of beadle instinct anent drunkards and pilferers, and disorderly persons of all sorts, stood barking most furiously.

This instinct is one of May's remarkable qualities. Dogs are all, more or less, physiognomists, and commonly pretty determined aristocrats, fond of the fine and averse to the shabby, distinguishing, with a nice accuracy, the master castes from the pariahs of the world. But May's power of perception is another matter, more, as it were, moral. She has no objection to honest rags ; can away with dirt, or age, or ugliness, or any such accident, and, except just at home, makes no distinction between kitchen and parlour. Her intuition points entirely to the race of people commonly called suspicious, on whom she pounces at a glance. What a constable she would have made ! What a jewel of a thief-taker ! Pity that those four feet should stand in the way of her preferment ! she might have risen to be a Bow-street officer. As it is we make the gift useful in a small way. In the matter of hiring and marketing the whole village likes to consult May. Many a chap has stared when she has been whistled up to give her opinion as to his honesty ; and many a pig bargain has gone off on her veto. Our neighbour, mine host of the



Rose, used constantly to follow her judgment in the selection of his lodgers. His house was never so orderly as when under her government. At last he found out that she abhorred tipplers as well as thieves—indeed, she actually barked away three of his best customers : and he left off appealing to her sagacity, since which he has, at different times, lost three silver spoons and a leg of mutton. 'With every one else May is an oracle. Not only in the case of wayfarers and vagrants, but amongst our own people, her fancies are quite a touchstone. A certain hump-backed cobbler, for instance—May cannot abide him, and I don't think he has had so much as a job of heel-piecing to do since her dislike became public. She really took away his character.

Longer than I have taken to relate Mayflower's accomplishments stood we, like the folks in the Critic, at a dead lock ; May, who probably regarded the gipsy as a sort of rival, an interloper on her oracular domain, barking with the voice of a lioness—the gipsy trying to persuade me into having my fortune told—and I endeavouring to prevail on May to let the gipsy pass. Both attempts were unsuccessful : and the fair consulter of destiny, who had by this time recovered from the shame of her detection, extricated us from our dilemma by smuggling the old woman away through the house.

Of course Harriet was exposed to some raillery, and a good deal of questioning about her future fate, as to

which she preserved an obstinate, but evidently satisfied silence. At the end of three days, however—my readers are, I hope, learned enough in gipsy lore to know that, unless kept secret for three entire days, no prediction can come true—at the end of three days, when all the family except herself had forgotten the story, our pretty soubrette, half bursting with the long retention, took the opportunity of lacing on my new half-boots to reveal the prophecy. “She was to see within the week, and this was Saturday, the young man, the real young man, whom she was to marry.” “Why, Harriet, you know poor Joel.” “Joel, indeed! the gipsy said that the young man, the real young man, was to ride up to the house drest in a dark great coat (and Joel never wore a great coat in his life—all the world knew that he wore smock-frocks and jackets), and mounted on a white horse—and where should Joel get a white horse?” “Had this real young man made his appearance yet?” “No; there had not been a white horse past the place since Tuesday: so it must certainly be to-day.”

A good look-out did Harriet keep for white horses during this fateful Saturday, and plenty did she see. It was the market-day at B., and team after team came by with one, two, and three white horses; cart after cart, and gig after gig, each with a white steed: Colonel M.’s carriage, with its prancing pair—but still no horse-

man. At length one appeared ; but he had a great coat whiter than the animal he rode ; another, but he was old farmer Lewington, a married man ; a third, but he was little Lord L., a school-boy, on his Arabian poney. Besides, they all passed the house ; and as the day wore on, Harriet began, alternately, to profess her old infidelity on the score of fortune-telling, and to let out certain apprehensions that, if the gipsy did really possess the power of foreseeing events, and no such horseman arrived, she might possibly be unlucky enough to die an old maid—a fate for which, although the proper destiny of a coquette, our village beauty seemed to entertain a very decided aversion.

At last, just at dusk, just as Harriet, making believe to close our casement shutters, was taking her last peep up the road, something white appeared in the distance coming leisurely down the hill. Was it really a horse ? Was it not rather Titus Strong's cow driving home to milking ? A minute or two dissipated that fear : it certainly was a horse, and as certainly it had a dark rider. Very slowly he descended the hill, pausing most provokingly at the end of the village, as if about to turn up the Vicarage-lane. He came on, however, and after another short stop at the Rose, rode full up to our little gate, and catching Harriet's hand as she was opening the wicket, displayed to the

half-pleased, half-angry damsel the smiling triumphant face of her own Joel Brent, equipped in a new great coat, and mounted on his master's newly-purchased market nag. Oh, Joel! Joel! The gipsy! the gipsy!

## LITTLE RACHEL.

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IN one of the wild nooks of heath land, which are set so prettily amidst our richly timbered vallies, stands the cottage of Robert Ford, an industrious and substantial blacksmith. There is a striking appearance of dingy comfort about the whole demesne, forming as it does a sort of detached and isolated territory in the midst of the unenclosed common by which it is surrounded. The ample garden, whose thick dusty quickset hedge runs along the high road ; the snug cottage whose gable-end abuts on the causeway ; the neat court which parts the house from the long low-browed shop and forge ; and the stable, cart-shed, and piggeries behind, have all an air of rustic opulence : even the clear irregular pond, half covered with ducks and geese that adjoins, and the old pollard oak, with a milestone leaning against it, that overhangs the dwelling, seem in accordance with its consequence and character, and give finish and harmony to the picture.

The inhabitants were also in excellent keeping. Robert Ford, a stout, hearty, middle-aged man, sooty and grim as a collier, paced backward and forward between the house and the forge with the step of a man of substance—his very leather apron had an air of importance; his wife Dinah, a merry comely woman, sat at the open door, in an amplitude of cap and gown and handkerchief, darning an eternal worsted stocking, and hailed the passers-by with the cheerful freedom of one well to do in the world; and their three sons, well-grown lads from sixteen to twenty, were the pride of the village for industry and good humour—to say nothing of their hereditary love of cricket. On a Sunday, when they had on their best clothes and cleanest faces, they were the handsomest youths in the parish. Robert Ford was proud of his boys, as well he might be, and Dinah was still prouder.

Altogether it was a happy family and a pretty scene; especially of an evening, when the forge was at work, and when the bright firelight shone through the large unglazed window, illumining with its strange red unearthly light, the group that stood round the anvil; showers of sparks flying from the heated iron, and the loud strokes of the sledge hammer resounding over all the talking and laughing of the workmen, re-enforced by three or four idlers who were lounging about the shop. It formed a picture, which in a summer evening, we

could seldom pass without stopping to contemplate; besides I had a roadside acquaintance with Mrs. Ford, had taken shelter in her cottage from thunder-storms and snow-storms, and even by daylight could not walk by without a friendly "How d'ye do."

Late in last autumn we observed an addition to the family, in the person of a pretty little shy lass, of some eight years old, a fair slim small-boned child, with delicate features, large blue eyes, a soft colour, light shining hair, and a remarkable neatness in her whole appearance. She seemed constantly busy, either sitting on a low stool by Dinah's side at needle-work, or gliding about the kitchen engaged in some household employment—for the wide open door generally favoured the passengers with a full view of the interior, from the fully stored bacon-rack to the nicely swept hearth; and the little girl, if she perceived herself to be looked at, would slip behind the clock-case, or creep under the dresser to avoid notice. Mrs. Ford, when questioned as to her new inmate, said that she was her husband's niece, the daughter of a younger brother, who had worked somewhere London-way, and had died lately, leaving a widow with eleven children in distressed circumstances. She added, that having no girl of their own, they had taken little Rachel for good and all; and vaunted much of her handiness, her sempstress-ship, and her scholarship, how she could read a chapter with the

parish clerk, or make a shirt with the schoolmistress. Hereupon she called her to display her work; which was indeed extraordinary for so young a needle-woman; and would fain have had her exhibit her other accomplishment of reading; but the poor little maid hung down her head, and blushed up to her white temples, and almost cried, and though too frightened to run away, shrank back till she was fairly hidden behind her portly aunt; so that that performance was perforce pretermitted. Mrs. Ford was rather scandalized at this shyness; and expostulated, coaxed and scolded, after the customary fashion on such occasions. "Shame-facedness was," she said, "Rachel's only fault, and she believed the child could not help it. Her uncle and cousins were as fond of her as fond could be, but she was afraid of them all, and had never entered the shop since there she had been. Rachel," she added, "was singular in all her ways, and never spent a farthing on apples or gingerbread, though she had a bran new sixpence, which her uncle had given her for hemming his cravats; she believed that she was saving it to send home."

A month passed away, during which time from the mere habit of seeing us frequently, Rachel became so far tamed as to behold me and my usual walking companion without much dismay; would drop her little curtsy without colouring so very deeply, and was even



won to accept a bun from that dear companion's pocket, and to answer yes or no to his questions.

At the end of that period, as we were returning home in the twilight from a round of morning visits, we perceived a sort of confusion in the forge, and heard loud sounds of scolding from within the shop, mixed with bitter lamentations from without. On a nearer approach, we discovered that the object in distress was an old acquaintance ; a young Italian boy, such a wanderer from the Lake of Como, as he, whom Wordsworth has addressed so beautifully :

——“ Or on thy head to poise a show  
Of plaster-craft in seemly row ;  
The graceful form of milk-white steed,  
Or bird that soared with Ganymede ;  
Or through our hamlets thou wilt bear  
The sightless Milton with his hair  
Around his placid temples curled  
And Shakspeare at his side——a freight,  
If clay could think and mind were weight,  
For him who bore the world !”

He passed us almost every day, carrying his tray full of images into every quarter of the village. We had often wondered how he could find vent for his commodities ; but our farmers' wives patronize that branch of art ; and Stefano, with his light firm step, his upright carriage, his dancing eyes, and his broken English, was an universal favourite.

At present the poor boy's keen Italian features and bright dark eyes were disfigured by crying ; and his loud wailings and southern gesticulations bore witness to the extremity of his distress. The cause of his grief was visible in the half empty tray that rested on the window of the forge, and the green parrot which lay in fragments on the footpath. The wrath of Robert Ford required some farther explanation, which the presence of his worship instantly brought forth, although the enraged blacksmith was almost too angry to speak intelligibly.

It appeared that his youngest and favourite son, William, had been chaffering with Stefano for this identical green parrot, to present to Rachel, when a mischievous lad, running along the road, had knocked it from the window sill, and reduced it to the state which we saw. So far was mere misfortune ; and undoubtedly if left to himself our good neighbour would have indemnified the little merchant ; but poor Stefano, startled at the suddenness of the accident, trembling at the anger of the severe master on whose account he travelled the country, and probably in the darkness, really mistaking the offender, unluckily accused William Ford of the overthrow ; which accusation, although the assertion was instantly and humbly retracted on William's denial, so aroused the English blood of the father, a complete John Bull, that he was raving, till black in the face, against cheats and foreigners, and threatening the young

Italian with whipping, and the treadmill, and justices, and stocks, when we made our appearance, and the storm, having nearly exhausted its fury, gradually abated.

By this time, however, the clamour had attracted a little crowd of lookers on from the house and the road, amongst the rest Mrs. Ford, and, peeping behind her aunt, little Rachel. Stefano continued to exclaim in his imperfect accent "He will beat me!" and to sob and crouch and shiver, as if actually suffering under the impending chastisement. It was impossible not to sympathize with such a reality of distress, although we felt that an English boy, similarly situated, would have been too stout-hearted not to restrain its expression. "Sixpence!" and "my master will beat me!" intermixed with fresh bursts of crying, were all his answers to the various enquiries as to the amount of his loss, with which he was assailed; and young William Ford, "a lad of grace," was approaching his hand to his pocket, and my dear companion had just drawn forth his purse, when the good intentions of the one were arrested by the stern commands of his father, and the other was stopped by the re-appearance of Rachel, who had run back to the house, and now darted through the group holding out her own new sixpence,—her hoarded sixpence, and put it into Stefano's hand!

It may be imagined that the dear child was no loser by her generosity; she was loaded with caresses by

every one, which, too much excited to feel her bashfulness, she not only endured but returned. Her uncle, thus rebuked by an infant, was touched almost to tears. He folded her in his arms, kissed her and blessed her; gave Stefano half a crown for the precious sixpence, and swore to keep it as a relique and a lesson as long as he lived.

## EARLY RECOLLECTIONS.

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### MY GODFATHER'S MANŒUVRING.

I HAVE said that my dear godfather was a great match-maker. One of his exploits in this way, which occurred during my second visit to him and Mrs. Evelyn, I am now about to relate.

Amongst the many distant cousins to whom I was introduced in that northern region, was a young kinswoman of the name of Hervey—Lucy Hervey—an orphan heiress of considerable fortune, who lived in the same town and the same street with my godfather, under the protection of a lady who had been the governess of her childhood, and continued with her as the friend of her youth. Sooth to say, their friendship was of that tender and sentimental sort at which the world, the wicked world, is so naughty as to laugh. Miss Reid and Miss Hervey were names quite as inseparable as goose and apple-sauce, or tongue and chicken. They

regularly made their appearance together, and there would have appeared I know not what of impropriety in speaking of either singly; it would have looked like a tearing asunder of the "double cherry," respecting which, in their case, even the "seeming parted" would have been held too disjunctive a phrase, so tender and inseparable was their union; although, as far as resemblance went, no simile could be more inapplicable. Never were two people more unlike in mind and person.

Lucy Hervey was a pretty little woman of six and twenty; but from a delicate figure, delicate features, and a most delicate complexion, looking much younger. Perhaps the total absence of strong expression, the mildness and simplicity of her countenance, and the artlessness and docility of her manner might conduce to the mistake. She was a sweet gentle creature, generous and affectionate; and not wanting in sense, although her entire reliance on her friend's judgment, and constant habit of obedience to her wishes rendered the use of it somewhat rare.

Miss Reid was a tall awkward woman, raw-boned, lank and huge, just what one fancies a man would be in petticoats; with a face that, except the beard (certainly she had no beard) might have favoured the supposition; so brown and bony and stern and ill-favoured was her unfortunate visage. In one point, she was lucky. There was no guessing at her age, certainly not within ten

years; nor within twenty. She looked old: but with that figure, those features, and that complexion, she must have looked old at eighteen. To guess her age was impossible. Her voice was deep and dictatorial; her manner rough and assuming; and her conversation unmercifully sensible and oracular—"full of wise saws and modern instances." For the rest, in spite of her inauspicious exterior, she was a good sort of disagreeable woman: charitable and kind in her way; genuinely fond of Lucy Hervey, whom she petted and scolded and coaxed and managed just as a nurse manages a child; and tolerably well liked of all her acquaintance—except Mr. Evelyn, who had been at war with her for the last nine years, on the subject of his fair cousin's marriage; and had, at last, come to regard her pretty much as a prime minister may look on an opposition leader,—as a regular opponent, an obstacle to be put down, or swept away. I verily believe that he hated her as much as his kindly nature could hate any body.

To be sure, it was no slight grievance to have so fair a subject for his matrimonial speculations, a kinswoman too, just under his very eye, and to find all his plans thwarted by that inexorable gouvernante—more especially, as, without her aid, it was morally certain that the pretty Lucy would never have had the heart to say *no* to any body. Ever since Miss Hervey was seventeen, my dear godpapa had been scheming for her advantage.

It was quite melancholy to hear him count up the husbands she might have had,—beginning with the Duke's son, her partner at her first race-ball,—and ending with the young newly-arrived physician, his last protégé : “ now,” he said, “ she might die an old maid ; he had done with her.” And there did actually appear to be a cessation of all his matrimonial plans in that quarter. Miss Reid herself laid aside her mistrust of him ; and a truce, if not a peace, was tacitly concluded between these sturdy antagonists. Mr. Evelyn seemed to have given up the game—a strange thing for him to do whilst he had a pawn left ! But so it was. His adversary had the board all to herself ; and was in as good humour, as a winning player generally is. Miss Reid was never remembered so amiable. We saw them almost every day, as the fashion is amongst neighbours in small towns, and used to ride and walk together continually—although Lucy, whose health was delicate, frequently declined accompanying us on our more distant excursions.

Our usual beau, besides the dear godpapa, was a Mr. Morris, the curate of the parish—an uncouth, gawky, lengthy man, with an astounding Westmoreland dialect, and a most portentous laugh. Really his ha ! ha ! was quite a shock to the nerves—a sort of oral shower-bath ; so sudden and so startling was the explosion. In loudness, it resembled half a dozen ordinary laughs “ rolled into one ;” and as the gentleman was of a facetious dis-



position, and chorused his own good things, as well as those of other people, with this awful cachinnation, it was no joking matter. But he was so excellent a person, so cordial, so jovial, so simple-hearted, and so contented with a lot none of the most prosperous, that one could not help liking him, laugh and all. He was a widower, with one only son, a Cambridge scholar, of whom he was deservedly proud. Edward Morris, besides his academical honours (I think he had been senior wrangler of his year), was a very fine young man, with an intelligent countenance, but exceedingly shy, silent and abstracted. I could not help thinking the poor youth was in love; but his father and Mr. Evelyn laid the whole blame on the mathematics. He would sit sometimes for an hour together, immersed, as they said, in his calculations, with his eyes fixed on Lucy Hervey, as if her sweet face had been the problem he was solving. But your mathematicians are privileged people; and so apparently my fair cousin thought, for she took no notice, unless by blushing a shade the deeper. It was worth while to look at Lucy Hervey, when Edward Morris was gazing on her in his absent fits; her cheeks were as red as a rose.

How these blushes came to escape the notice of Miss Reid, I cannot tell,—unless she might happen to have her own attention engrossed by Edward's father. For certain, that original paid her, in his odd way, great

attention ; was her constant beau in our walking parties ; sate by her side at dinner ; and manœuvred to get her for his partner at whist. She had the benefit of his best bon-mots, and his loudest laughs ; and she seemed to me not to dislike that portentous sound, so much as might have been expected from a lady of her particularity. I ventured to hint my observations to Mr. Evelyn ; who chuckled, laid his forefinger against his nose, rubbed his hands, and called me a simpleton.

Affairs were in this position, when one night just at going to bed, my good godfather, with a little air of mystery (no uncommon preparation to his most trifling plans), made an appointment to walk with me before breakfast, as far as a pet farm about a mile out of the town, the superintendence of which was one of his greatest amusements. Early the next morning, the housemaid, who usually attended me, made her appearance, and told me that her master was waiting for me, that I must make haste, and that he desired I would be smart, as he expected a party to breakfast at the farm. This sort of injunction is seldom thrown away on a damsel of eighteen ; accordingly, I adjusted, with all dispatch, a new blue silk pelisse, and sallied forth into the corridor, which I heard him pacing as impatiently as might be. There, to my no small consternation, instead of the usual gallant compliments of the most gallant of godfathers, I was received with very disapproving glances :

told that I looked like an old woman in that dowdy-coloured pelisse, and conjured to exchange it for a white gown. Half affronted, I nevertheless obeyed; doffed the pelisse, and donned the white gown, as ordered: and being greeted this time with a bright smile, and a chuck under the chin, we set out in high good humour on our expedition.

Instead, however, of proceeding straight to the farm, Mr. Evelyn made a slight deviation from our course, turning down the market-place, and into the warehouse of a certain Mrs. Bennet, milliner and mantua-maker, a dashing over-dressed dame, who presided over the fashions for ten miles round, and marshalled a compter full of caps and bonnets at one side of the shop, whilst her husband, an obsequious civil bowing tradesman, dealt out gloves and stockings at the other. A little dark parlour behind was common to both. Into this den, was I ushered; and Mrs. Bennet, with many apologies, began, at a signal from my godfather, to divest me of all my superfluous blueness, silk handkerchief, sash and wrist-ribbons, (for with the constancy which is born of opposition, I had, in relinquishing my obnoxious pelisse, clung firmly to the obnoxious colour) replacing them by white sattin ribbons and a beautiful white shawl; and, finally, exchanging my straw bonnet for one of white silk, with a deep lace veil—that piece of delicate finery which all women delight in. Whilst I was now ad-

miring the richness of the genuine Brussels point, and now looking at myself in a little glass which Mrs. Bennet was holding to my face, for the better display of her millinery—the bonnet, to do her justice, was pretty and becoming,—during this engrossing contemplation, her smooth silky husband crept behind me with the stealthy pace of a cat, and relying, as it seems, on my pre-occupation, actually drew my York-tan gloves from my astonished hands, and substituted a pair of his own best white kid. This operation being completed, my god-papa, putting his forefinger to his lip in token of secrecy, hurried me with a look of great triumph, from the shop.

He walked at a rapid pace; and, between quick motion and amazement, I was too much out of breath to utter a word, till we had passed the old gothic castle at the end of the town, and crossed the long bridge that spans its wide and winding river. I then rained questions on my dear old friend, who chuckled and nodded, and vented two or three half laughs, but vouchsafed nothing tending to a reply. At length, we came to a spot where the road turned suddenly to the left, (the way to the farm), whilst, right before us, rose a knoll, on which stood the church, a large, heavy, massive building, almost a cathedral, finely relieved by the range of woody hills which shut in the landscape. A turning gate, with a tall straight cypress on either side, led into the churchyard; and through this gate Mr. Evelyn passed. The

church-door was a little a-jar, and, through the crevice, was seen peeping the long red nose of the old clerk, a Bardolphian personage, to whom my godfather, who loved to oblige people in their own way, sometimes did the questionable service of clearing off his score at the Greyhound; his red nose and a skirt of his shabby black coat peeped through the porch; whilst, behind one of the buttresses, glimmered, for an instant, the white drapery of a female figure. I did not need these indications to convince me that a wedding was the object in view; that had been certain from the first cashiering of my blue ribbons; but I was still at a loss, as to the parties; and felt quite relieved by Mr. Evelyn's question, "Pray, my dear, were you ever a bride's-maid?"—since, in the extremity of my perplexity, I had had something like an apprehension that an unknown beau might appear at the call of this mighty manager, and I be destined to play the part of bride myself. Comforted to find that I was only to enact the confidante, I had now leisure to be exceedingly curious as to my *prima donna*. My curiosity was speedily gratified.

On entering the church we had found only a neighbouring clergyman, not Mr. Morris, at the altar; and, looking round at the opening of another door, I perceived the worthy Curate in a jetty clerical suit, bristling with newness, leading Miss Reid be-flounced and be-scarfed and be-veiled and be-plumed, and all in a

flutter of bridal finery, in great state, up the aisle. Mr. Evelyn advanced to meet them, took the lady's fair hand from Mr. Morris, and led her along with all the grace of an old courtier; I fell into the procession at the proper place; the amiable pair were duly married, and I thought my office over. I was never more mistaken in my life.

In the midst of the customary confusion of kissing and wishing joy, and writing and signing registers and certificates, which form so important and disagreeable a part of that disagreeable and important ceremony, Mr. Evelyn had vanished; and just as the bride was enquiring for him, with the intention of leaving the church, he reappeared, through the very same side-door which had admitted the first happy couple, leading Lucy Hervey, and followed by Edward Morris. The father evidently expected them; the new step-mother as evidently did not. Never did a thief, taken in the manner, seem more astonished than that sage *gouvernante*! Lucy on her part, blushed and hung back, and looked shyer and prettier than ever; the old clerk grinned; the clergyman, who had shewn some symptoms of astonishment at the first wedding, now smiled to Mr. Evelyn, as if this accounted, and made amends for it; whilst the dear godpapa himself chuckled and nodded and rubbed his hands, and chucked both bride and bride's-maid under the chin, and seemed ready to cut capers for joy. Again the book was

opened at the page of destiny ; again I held the milk-white glove ; and after nine years of unsuccessful manœuvring, my cousin Lucy was married. It was, undoubtedly, the most triumphant event of the good old man's life ; and I don't believe that either couple ever saw cause to regret the dexterity in the art of match-making which produced their double union. They have been as happy as people usually are in this work-a-day world, especially the young mathematician and his pretty wife ; and their wedding-day is still remembered in W. ; for besides his munificence to singer, ringer, sexton and clerk, Mr. Evelyn roasted two sheep on the occasion, gave away ten bride cakes, and made the whole town tipsy.

## THE YOUNG GIPSY.

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THE weather continuing fine and dry, I did not fail to revisit my gipsy encampment, which became more picturesque every day in the bright sun-gleams and lengthening shadows of a most brilliant autumn. A slight frost had strewed the green lane with the light yellow leaves of the elm—those leaves on whose yielding crispness it is so pleasant to tread, and which it is so much pleasanter to watch whirling along, “thin dancers upon air,” in the fresh October breeze; whilst the red-denied beech, and spotted sycamore, and the rich oaks dropping with acorns, their foliage just edging into its deep orange brown, added all the magic of colour to the original beauty of the scenery. It was undoubtedly the prettiest walk in the neighbourhood, and the one which I frequented the most.

Ever since the adventure of May, the old fortune-teller and I understood each other perfectly. She knew that I was no client, no patient, no customer (which is the fittest name for a goosecap who goes to a



gipsy to ask what is to befall her?) : but she also knew that I was no enemy either to her or her profession ; for, after all, if people choose to amuse themselves by being simpletons, it is no part of their neighbours' business to hinder them. I, on my side, liked the old gipsy exceedingly ; I liked both her humour and her good-humour, and had a real respect for her cleverness. We always interchanged a smile and a nod, meet where we might. May, too, had become accustomed to the whole party. The gift of a bone from the cauldron—a bare bone—your well-fed dog likes nothing so well as such a wind-fall, and if stolen the relish is higher—a bare bone brought about that reconciliation. I am sorry to accuse May of accepting a bribe, but such was the fact. She now looked at the fortune-teller with great complacency, would let the boys stroke her long neck, and in her turn would condescend to frolic with their shabby curs, who, trained to a cat-like caution and mistrust of their superiors, were as much alarmed at her advances as if a lioness had offered herself as their play-fellow. There was no escaping her civility, however, so they submitted to their fate, and really seemed astonished to find themselves alive when the gambol was over. One of them, who, from a tail turned over his back like a squirrel, and an amazingly snub nose, had certainly some mixture of the pug in his composition, took a great fancy to her when his fright was past : which she repaid by the

sort of scornful kindness, the despotic protection proper to her as a beauty, and a favourite, and a high-blooded greyhound—always a most proud and stately creature. The poor little mongrel used regularly to come jumping to meet her, and she as regularly turned him over and over and over, and round and round and round, like a tetotum. He liked it, apparently, for he never failed to come and court the tossing whenever she went near him.

The person most interesting to me of the whole party was the young girl. She was remarkably pretty, and of the peculiar prettiness which is so frequently found amongst that singular people. Her face resembled those which Sir Joshua has often painted—rosy, round, and bright, set in such a profusion of dark curls, lighted by such eyes, and such a smile! and she smiled whenever you looked at her—she could not help it. Her figure was light and small, of low stature, and with an air of great youthfulness. In her dress she was, for a gipsy, surprisingly tidy. For the most part, that ambulatory race have a preference for rags, as forming their most appropriate wardrobe, being a part of their tools of trade, their insignia of office. I do not imagine that Harriet's friend, the fortune-teller, would have exchanged her stained tattered cloak for the thickest and brightest red cardinal that ever came out of a woollen-draper's shop. And she would have been a

loser if she had. Take away that mysterious mantle, and a great part of her reputation would go too. There is much virtue in an old cloak. I question if the simplest of her clients, even Harriet herself, would have consulted her in a new one. But the young girl was tidy ; not only accurately clean, and with clothes neatly and nicely adjusted to her trim little form, but with the rents darned, and the holes patched, in a way that I should be glad to see equalled by our own villagers.

Her manners were quite as ungipsy-like as her apparel, and so was her conversation ; for I could not help talking to her, and was much pleased with her frankness and innocence, and the directness and simplicity of her answers. She was not the least shy ; on the contrary, there was a straight-forward look, a fixing of her sweet eyes full of pleasure and reliance right upon you, which, in the description, might seem almost too assured, but which, in reality, no more resembled vulgar assurance than did the kindred artlessness of Shakspeare's Miranda. It seems strange to liken a gipsy girl to that loveliest creation of genius ; but I never saw that innocent gaze without being sure that just with such a look of pleased attention, of affectionate curiosity, did the island princess listen to Ferdinand.

All that she knew of her little story she told without scruple, in a young liquid voice, and with a little curtsy between every answer, that became her extremely.

“ Her name,” she said, “ was Fanny. She had no father or mother ; they were dead ; and she and her brothers lived with her grandmother. They lived always out of doors, sometimes in one place—sometimes in another ; but she should like always to live under that oak-tree, it was so pleasant. Her grandmother was very good to them all, only rather particular. She loved her very much ; and she loved Dick (her eldest brother), though he was a sad unlucky boy, to be sure. She was afraid he would come to some bad end”—

And, indeed, Dick at that moment seemed in imminent danger of verifying his sister’s prediction. He had been trying for a gleaning of nuts amongst the tall hazels on the top of a bank, which, flanked by a deep ditch, separated the coppice from the green. We had heard him for the last five minutes smashing and crashing away at a prodigious rate, swinging himself from stalk to stalk, and tugging and climbing like a sailor or a monkey ; and now, at the very instant of Fanny’s uttering this prophecy, having missed a particularly venturesome grasp, he was impelled forward by the rebound of the branches, and fell into the ditch with a tremendous report, bringing half the nuttery after him, and giving us all a notion that he had broken his neck. His time, however, was not yet come ; he was on his feet again in half a minute, and in another half minute we again heard him rustling amongst the hazel boughs ;

and Fanny and I went on with our talk, which the fright and scolding, consequent on this accident, had interrupted. My readers are of course aware, that when any one meets with a fall, the approved medicament of the most affectionate relatives is a good dose of scolding.

“She liked Dick,” she continued, “in spite of his unluckiness—he was so quick and good-humoured ; but the person she loved most was her youngest brother, Willy. Willy was the best boy in the world, he would do any thing she told him ” (indeed the poor child was in the very act of picking up acorns, under her inspection, to sell, as I afterwards found, in the village,) “and never got into mischief, or told a lie in his life ; she had had the care of him ever since he was born, and she wished she could get him a place.” By this time the little boy had crept towards us, and still collecting the acorns in his small brown hands, had turned up his keen intelligent face, and was listening with great interest to our conversation. “A place!” said I, much surprised. “Yes,” replied she firmly, “a place. ’Twould be a fine thing for my poor Willy to have a house over him in the cold winter nights.” And with a grave tenderness, that might have beseemed a young mother, she stooped her head over the boy and kissed him. “But *you* sleep out of doors in the cold winter nights, Fanny?”—“Me! oh, I don’t mind it, and sometimes we creep into a barn.

But poor Willy ! If I could but get Willy a place, my lady !”

This “ my lady,” the first gipsy word that Fanny had uttered, lost all that it would have had of unpleasing in the generosity and affectionateness of the motive. I could not help promising to recommend her Willy, although I could not hold out any very strong hopes of success, and we parted, Fanny following me, with thanks upon thanks, almost to the end of the lane.

Two days after I again saw my pretty gipsy ; she was standing by the side of our gate, too modest even to enter the court, waiting for my coming out to speak to me. I brought her into the hall, and was almost equally delighted to see her, and to hear her news ; for although I had most faithfully performed my promise, by mentioning master Willy to every body likely to want a servant of his qualifications, I had seen enough in the course of my canvass to convince me that a gipsy boy of eight years old would be a difficult protégé to provide for.

Fanny’s errand relieved my perplexity. She came to tell me that Willy had gotten a place—“ That Thomas Lamb, my lord’s head gamekeeper, had hired him to tend his horse and his cow, and serve the pigs, and feed the dogs, and dig the garden, and clean the shoes and knives, and run errands—in short, to be man of all work. Willy was gone that very morning. He had cried to

part with her, and she had almost cried herself, she should miss him so : he was like her own child. But then it was such a great place ; and Thomas Lamb seemed such a kind master—talked of new clothing him, and meant him to wear shoes and stockings, and was very kind indeed. But poor Willy had cried sadly at leaving her,”—and the sweet matronly elder sister fairly cried too.

I comforted her all I could, first by praises of Thomas Lamb, who happened to be of my acquaintance, and was indeed the very master whom, had I had the choice, I would have selected for Willy ; and secondly, by the gift of some unconsidered trifles, which one should have been ashamed to offer to any one who had ever had a house over her head, but which the pretty gipsy girl received with transport, especially some working materials of the commonest sort. Poor Fanny had never known the luxury of a thimble before ; it was as new to her finger as shoes and stockings were likely to be to Willy's feet. She forgot her sorrows, and tripped home to her oak-tree the happiest of the happy.

Thomas Lamb, Willy's new master, was, as I have said, of my acquaintance. He was a remarkably fine young man, and as well-mannered as those of his calling usually are. Generally speaking, there are no persons, excepting real gentlemen, so gentlemanly as game-keepers. They keep good company. The beautiful and

graceful creatures whom they at once preserve and pursue, and the equally noble and generous animals whom they train, are their principal associates ; and even by their masters they are regarded rather as companions than as servants. They attend them in their sports more as guides and leaders than as followers, pursuing a common recreation with equal enjoyment, and often with superior skill. Gamekeepers are almost always well behaved, and Thomas Lamb was eminently so. He had quite the look of a man of fashion ; the person, the carriage, the air. His figure was tall and striking ; his features delicately carved, with a paleness of complexion, and a slight appearance of ill-health that added to their elegance. In short, he was exactly what the ladies would have called interesting in a gentleman ; and the gentleness of his voice and manner, and the constant propriety of his deportment, tended to confirm the impression.

Luckily for him, however, this delicacy and refinement lay chiefly on the surface. His constitution, habits, and temper, were much better fitted to his situation, much hardier and heartier than they appeared to be. He was still a bachelor, and lived by himself in a cottage, almost as lonely as if it had been placed in a desert island. It stood in the centre of his preserves, in the midst of a wilderness of coppice and woodland, accessible only by a narrow winding path, and at least a mile



from the nearest habitation. When you had threaded the labyrinth, and were fairly arrived in Thomas's dominion, it was a pretty territory. A low thatched cottage, very irregularly built, with a porch before the door, and a vine half-covering the casements; a garden a good deal neglected, (Thomas Lamb's four-footed subjects, the hares, took care to eat up all his flowers: hares are animals of taste, and are particularly fond of pinks and carnations, the rogues!) an orchard and a meadow, completed the demesne. There was, also, a commodious dog-kennel, and a stable, of which the outside was completely covered with the trophies of Thomas's industry—kites, jackdaws, magpies, hawks, crows, and owls, nailed by the wings, *displayed*, as they say in heraldry, against the wall, with polecats, weazels, stoats, and hedgehogs figuring at their side, a perfect menagerie of dead game-killers\*.

But the prettiest part of this woodland cottage was the real living game that flitted about it, as tame as barn-door fowls; partridges flocking to be fed, as if

\* Foxes, the destruction of which is so great an object in a pleasant preserve, never are displayed, especially if there be a pack of hounds in the neighbourhood. That odious part of a gamekeeper's occupation is as quietly and unostentatiously performed as any operation of gunnery can be. Lords of manors will even affect to preserve foxes—Heaven forgive them!—just as an unpopular ministry is sure to talk of protecting the liberty of the subject.

there were not a dog, or a gun, or a man in the world ; pheasants, glorious creatures ! coming at a call ; hares, almost as fearless as Cowper's, that would stand and let you look at them ; would let you approach quite near, before they raised one quivering ear and darted off ; and that even then, when the instinct of timidity was aroused, would turn at a safe distance to look again. Poor, pretty things ! What a pity it seemed to kill them !

Such was to be Willy's future habitation. The day after he entered upon his place, I had an opportunity of offering my double congratulations, to the master on his new servant, to the servant on his new master. Whilst taking my usual walk, I found Thomas Lamb, Dick, Willy, and Fanny, about half-way up the lane, engaged in the animating sport of unearthing a weazel, which one of the gipsy dogs had followed into a hole by the ditch-side. The boys shewed great sportmanship on this occasion ; and so did their poor curs, who, with their whole bodies inserted into different branches of the burrow, and nothing visible but their tails (the one, the long puggish brush of which I have already made mention, the other a terrier-like stump, that maintained an incessant wag), continued to dig and scratch, throwing out showers of earth, and whining with impatience and eagerness. Every now and then, when quite gasping and exhausted, they came out for a moment's air ; whilst the boys took their turn, poking with a long stick, or

loosening the ground with their hands, and Thomas stood by, superintending and encouraging both dog and boy, and occasionally cutting a root or a bramble that impeded their progress. Fanny, also, entered into the pursuit with great interest, dropping here and there a word of advice, as nobody can help doing when they see others in perplexity. In spite of all these aids, the mining operation proceeded so slowly, that the experienced keeper sent off his new attendant for a spade to dig out the vermin, and I pursued my walk.

After this encounter, it so happened that I never went near the gipsy tent without meeting Thomas Lamb—sometimes on foot, sometimes on his pony; now with a gun, and now without; but always loitering near the oak-tree, and always, as it seemed, reluctant to be seen. It was very unlike Thomas's usual manner to seem ashamed of being caught in any place, or in any company: but so it was. Did he go to the ancient sybil to get his fortune told? or was Fanny the attraction? A very short time solved the query.

One night, towards the end of the month, the keeper presented himself at our house on justice business. He wanted a summons for some poachers who had been committing depredations in the preserve. Thomas was a great favourite: and was, of course, immediately admitted, his examination taken, and his request complied with. "But how," said the magistrate, looking up from

the summons which he was signing, "how can you expect, Thomas, to keep your pheasants, when that gipsy boy with his finders has pitched his tent just in the midst of your best coppices, killing more game than half the poachers in the country?"—"Why, as to the gipsy, sir," replied Thomas, "Fanny is as good a girl—" "I was not talking of Fanny," interrupted the man of warrants, smiling,— "as good a girl," pursued Thomas — "A very pretty girl!" ejaculated his worship,— "as good a girl," resumed Thomas, "as ever trod the earth!" — "A sweet pretty creature, certainly," was again the provoking reply. "Ah, sir, if you could but hear how her little brother talks of her!"—"Why, Thomas, this gipsy has made an impression."—"Ah, sir! she is such a good girl!"—and the next day they were married.

It was a measure to set every tongue in the village a wagging; for Thomas, besides his personal good gifts, was well to do in the world—my lord's head keeper, and prime favourite. He might have pretended to any farmer's daughter in the parish: every body cried out against the match. It was rather a bold measure, certainly; but I think it will end well. They are beyond a doubt, the handsomest couple in these parts; and as the fortune-teller and her eldest grandson have had the good sense to decamp, and Fanny, besides being the most grateful and affectionate creature on earth, turns out clever and docile, and comports herself just as if she

had lived in a house all her days : there are some hopes that in process of time her sin of gipsyism may be forgiven, and Mrs. Lamb be considered as visitable, at least by her next neighbours, the wives of the shoemaker and the parish clerk. At present, I am sorry to say, that those worthy persons have sent both Thomas and her to Coventry—a misfortune which they endure with singular resignation.

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And now, since farewell must be said, I do not know that I can find a fitter moment. We are all as happy as people in a last page ought to be ;—the lovers in an union of affection, the rest of the village in the news and the wonderment. Farewell, then, courteous Reader !

“ To all to each a fair good night  
And pleasant dreams and slumbers light !”

THE END.

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